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**Citation: Boampong, Michael (2020) Growing up in times of crisis: negotiating economic constraints and opportunities in transnational families. [Thesis] (Unpublished)**

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**Growing up in times of crisis: Negotiating economic constraints  
and opportunities in transnational families**

2020

Michael Boampong

A thesis submitted to Birkbeck, University of London, for the partial  
fulfilment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department  
of Geography

Word count: 93,027

## **Declaration**

I, Michael Boampong, declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own except where referenced in the text and bibliography.

This thesis' copyright rests with the author. Quotation from it is allowed, provided acknowledgement is made.

I can confirm that parts of Chapter 5 have been published elsewhere. The full reference is: Boampong, M. (2019) 'Transnational practices and children's local lives in times of economic crisis.' In *Intersectionality and Difference in Childhood and Youth*; edited by Nadia von Benz and Catherine Wilkinson. London: Routledge.

## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my academic supervisor, Karen Wells for her thought-provoking engagement and feedback regarding theoretical clarity and my empirical analysis. I consider myself truly blessed to have received regular intellectual guidance from Karen from my first day at Birkbeck College. I am equally grateful for other academic opportunities such as teaching, conference participation, as well as the encouragement and concern that I received regarding my welfare. Additionally, I am indebted to Jasmine Gideon for her direction which assisted me in shaping my thoughts during the initial phase of my research. Karen, Jasmine and other academics that I encountered in the past four years have helped to keep my research focused and challenged me to think deeper even when my understanding was unclear.

My deepest appreciation also goes to all my research respondents who allowed me into their homes and shared their life experiences and dreams with me. In particular, I thank Emmanuel Kwesi Quayson, Auntie Gifty, Lord Adusei, Mr Owusu Ansah, Arnold, Collins, Gifty Frimpong, Felicia, Michael Mensah, Sam Appiah and Cathy. Many of these people introduced me to other Ghanaians in London and also their relatives in the USA and Ghana, thereby enabling me to reach more transnational Ghanaian households. All throughout the study, people generously spent several priceless hours with me because they believed in my research. I give heartfelt thanks to the Afoakwah family in Ghana who took me to various places in their community for interviews and exposed me to their day-to-day lives of waking up and going to the farm, for instance. I also give special thanks to Dr Adjei; after tiring fieldwork days, the house of the ‘Doctor’ was truly a place for rest and reflection.

I am also indebted to my parents, Mr and Mrs Boampong and my brother, George Boampong who have supported my educational aspirations since my childhood and were present with much-needed advice, encouragement and solidarity.

Thank you also goes to the Department of Geography administration team, especially Hurmine who often offered assistance regarding institutional requirements when needed. My thanks to Noemi who promptly responded to my library needs.

I wish to also thank Mary, Kajsa, Chiara, Isaac Osei Owusu, Lindsay, Andre, Heather, Rowan, Gavaza and Lauren for their comments on some of my initial drafts.

Finally, I would like to thank Pastor Sunday, Sister Abena, Sister Vida, Barbara, Michael Baodi, Joseph Boateng, Daniel Assamah and the Oppong family for their continuous encouragement and humour throughout this PhD journey.

My research was generously funded by Birkbeck College's Anniversary Scholarship. My participation in conferences was also sponsored by the School of Social Sciences, History and Philosophy and the Department of Geography.

This thesis is dedicated to the children and young people that were part of my study. I have always been inspired by their views and creativity and will forever remain a believer in the agency of children and young people.

From the depth of my heart, I am grateful to every person and institution whose contribution has made this research possible. I hope to be able to support you in some other way in the near future.

## **Abstract**

In the past three decades, neoliberal development has intensified economic migration. Meanwhile in western countries, the political-economic landscape has changed following the 2007–8 global financial crisis. Despite increasing research on everyday family experiences regarding the financial crisis, its implications on transnational childhoods and social fields has been underresearched.

Based on a multi-sited ethnographic study with 95 people (33 children, 22 young people and 40 adults) embedded in transnational social fields, this research explores the economic crisis' impact on social reproduction processes among Ghanaian-British transnational families. The study is inspired by Katz's notion of critical topography, which has the potential of revealing the effects of political-economic constraints on children and social reproduction. Qualitative methods, including repeated semi-structured interviews, observations and group discussions, as well as visual methods, were used to obtain children and other young people's transnational perspectives.

To examine families' constraints and how such constraints and opportunities are dealt with, I will draw on three concepts: social reproduction; capital; and transnational social fields.

Research findings indicate children and other young people are 'doing family' through kinship and non-kinship relationships within a transnational and transglobal context in their quest to survive economic constraints. This can be seen in twofold: material social practices (e.g. resource flows) of survival and leveraging on capital to achieve life course aspirations. To understand this, the emplacement of 'other' children and young people in surviving constraints and capital formation for the maintenance of transnational social fields is crucial.

I will argue that children and young people's capital and network formation are important assets for their sustenance and reproduction of transnational families during crises. However, their emplacement reveals their vulnerability and agency which shapes transnational social fields. This study offers insights into Childhood Studies and theoretical debates on structure and agency as well as transnational childhoods.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

FCUBE	Free Compulsory Basic Education
ICT	Communication Technology
KNUST	Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFC	Global Financial Crisis
GLSS	Ghana Living Standards Survey
GMG	Global Migration Group
GSS	Ghana Statistical Service
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
MIC	Middle-Income Country
HTAs	Hometown Associations
IMF	International Monetary Fund
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NELM	New Economics of Labour Migration
NSSC	New Social Studies of Childhood
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAP	Structural Adjustment Policies
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMS	Simultaneous Matched Sample
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
USA	United States of America
VFS Global	Visa Facilitation Services Global

## **Explanatory Notes**

### **Language**

As discussed in Chapter 2, fieldwork conversations for this research were conducted in Twi and English, depending on the preference of the interviewee. Where Twi was the medium of communication, I carefully translated the conversation into English while ensuring that implicit meanings were not lost. Moreover, I relied on the Advanced Akan Dictionary by Anane (2000) in instances where I was not sure of certain Twi words.

In this thesis, apart from respondent's quotes, I have italicised some English words and phrases for emphasis. Additionally, local Ghanaian languages may be italicised and followed by the English translation in parenthesis.

### **Ensuring confidentiality and safety of research participants**

The UK's 'hostile environment' towards migrants suggests the need to ensure that research respondent's identities are protected in my research publications, as discussed extensively in my methodology (Chapter 3).

The research's multi-sited fieldwork was carried out in three south London boroughs Croydon, Lambeth, and Southwark, as well as New York in the United States of America, and Kumasi in the Ashanti Region of Ghana. I decided not to add the actual locale or boroughs of respondents. Instead, broad location names such as London or Kumasi have been used to ensure respondents are unidentifiable. Moreover, the names of institutions and persons used in respondents' narratives or case studies have been anonymised. Also, I decided not to use any personal photographs of my respondents but rather common pictures useful for my analysis.

### **Definition of social class**

The main social class categories used in this study include middle-class, working-class and poor families.

Middle-class families: Families where children have at least one parent who occupies a certain managerial position at work. Additionally, parents have a higher education qualification that enables them to access various opportunities in society.

Working-class families: Families where parents are involved in low-level white colour jobs. Here, the parents may not have any form of higher education qualification. They



are not involved in any form of management position at work. Parents may also be self-employed or undertaking many economic activities to survive.

Poor families: In these families, parents may be unemployed or working under precarious job conditions where jobs are not guaranteed. Family members including parents, children and other young people may be dependent on the assistance of government social welfare or social relations for their survival.

# Chapter 1

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## **Transnational childhoods and family life trajectories**

In this Chapter I discuss the conceptualisation of transnational migration, childhood and social reproduction. In particular, I will reflect on how theoretical and methodological approaches to understanding transnational migration and social reproduction processes have under-theorised children's role in transnational migration and social reproduction processes. I set out the dissertation's theoretical underpinnings as well as my research's significant contribution to the theorisation of transnational childhoods and the effects of political and economic processes on children and childhood.

The 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) was considered one of the worst economic recessions since the Great Depression. It raised concerns about potential consequences for global trade, industrial production, remittances and financial credit and the stock market (Arguello, 2010; Elson, 2010). European government's policy responses to the crisis involved a shift from fiscal stimulus towards austerity measures (Richardson, 2010) which produced mixed outcomes. Previous research has shown that household welfare was impacted by austerity measures in areas such as reduced consumption, poor housing and inequalities in education and other social services (Hall, 2016; Seabrooke & Thomsen, 2016). While the available body of work is significant, they are primarily Eurocentric in their foci. Moreover, the western narratives have largely focused on European's vulnerabilities, precarity and how European/English working-class adults are 'getting by.'

Labour migrants have an important function in understanding capitalist relations of production. During the economic crisis, a striking feature of the narratives about the crisis's effects focused on the vulnerabilities of migrants as the 'first to be fired and the last to be hired,' amid reports of xenophobic attacks and rising global youth unemployment (Fix *et al.*, 2009; Ghosh, 2011). Similarly, anxieties were raised about the potential implication on migrant remittances, though aggregate estimates suggest that remittances have proven resilient during and in the aftermath of the crisis (Mohapatra and Ratha, no date; Awad, 2009).

My interest on the effects of the crisis on migration and migrants arose in 2011 while working with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in New York. This period

coincided with UNICEF's chairmanship of the United Nations (UN) Global Migration Group (GMG). Thus, a high-level 'Migration and Youth: Harnessing Opportunities for Development Symposium' was convened to give 'visibility' to children and young people's lives in the context of migration. A critical outcome of the event was children and young migrants' vulnerability to crisis. After the event, I wondered 'what is it like to live in times of crisis as a migrant' and 'how do migrants manage to send remittances despite being the 'last to be hired and first to be fired.' Related to this, the World Bank had reported remittance decline amid the recession but later confirmed remittance resilience (World Bank Group, 2012); this was enough to suggest to me that there are some social transformations to be explored in order to better understand the 'transnational social field.' While to date no studies have focused on transnational children and young people's perspectives or their role amid structural economic changes and the 'new' immigration crisis, childhood studies scholars have established the need for a macro-structural analysis of childhood given children's role in society and the implications for macro-structural dimensions of society on childhoods (Qvortrup, 1999). In other words, research and policy analysis regarding the crisis has often constructed children and childhood as a subordinate status in relation to adults (including migrant workers); children have often been overlooked as economic dependents rather than socioeconomic actors as I will discuss later in this Chapter.

Initially, I thought of focusing on Ghanaian migrants in 'destination' countries as a way of understanding their coping strategies and their transnational practices in times of crisis while abroad. However, considering my research subjects' transnational and local embeddedness, a transnational approach was more suitable. In principle, I decided to focus on Ghanaian transnational households with a particular interest in children and young people's transnational perspectives to discuss the (re)orientation of the transnational social fields. The construction of Ghana-UK transnational social fields are exemplary given colonial historical and new immigration trajectories between Ghana and the UK, yet the potential impacts on British-Ghanaian transnational childhoods have not been researched as established through my literature review in Chapter 2. As there is no multi-sited transnational ethnographic study that has focused on children and young people as important social actors who experience crisis differently than other British nationals and citizens there is an urgent need to find other ways of theorising transnational childhoods amid crisis.

The thesis advances the claim that while members of transnational families may be vulnerable to structural political-economic change, individuals actively cultivate or neglect social ties to survive periods of economic changes. Economic variations are examined within the context of neoliberal global capitalism in relation to transnational migration and social reproduction. Government's shrinking involvement in the social reproduction arena, increasing privatisation and heightened exploitation of workers has meant families have to bear the costs of social reproduction. However, how they do so and children's role in this process remains largely under-theorised. Children and other young people's response in terms of how they negotiate economic and social shifts in globalised social spaces may require us to rethink the theorisation of transnational childhoods and therefore 'transnational social fields' (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994).

The Chapter is structured as follows: First, five (5) vignettes taken from the nearly 100 people involved in this study are used to establish the missing transnational perspective amid changing political-economic conditions and how young people negotiate constraints while leveraging opportunities within local and globalised social spaces. Secondly, I discuss theoretical underpinnings related to migration studies and social reproduction to ascertain the children's representation and relevance in reconstructing childhoods to reveal their role in transnational migration process and social reproduction. Thirdly, I will focus on methodological innovations and methodologies relevant to understanding shifts in social reproduction and childhood practices. Finally, I set out the structure of the thesis and its argument.

### **The missing transnational perspective**

In Kumasi, Ghana, 12-year old, Mercy has finished school for the day and she sets a fire for her 24-year-old sister to use in cooking the evening meal. Afterwards, she goes to take care of customer sales at a shop owned by her London-based father who ships second-hand items for sale in the shop. She is 'waiting' and 'very much desires' to join her parents in London. She was born in London but due to her parent's inability to combine work and childcare demands, at 7-months old she was sent to Ghana for foster care by her maternal grandmother. While her parents' equally desire to bring her to the UK, they are working-class immigrants employed under zero-hours contract. Her parents feel it is impossible to meet the minimum of £18,600 annual income threshold for sponsoring a dependent. Her parents provide her needs including sending her toys and money for school fees; though

sometimes when the money is delayed, her grandmother or eldest sister provides money for her schooling.

Meanwhile, in South London, Afia who stayed in Ghana for three years returned to London at the age of six. Afia was also sent to Ghana for foster care from her ‘grandmother’ owing to her mother’s inability to provide what she termed as ‘good care.’ In London, Afia feels she has lost her ‘Twi<sup>1</sup>’ speaking competence since she returned from Ghana. She misses her friends in Ghana, Ghanaian food (particularly Fufu and Banku) and her ‘sister’ and ‘grandmother’ who took care of her while in Ghana, noting: ‘To me, everyone knows me in Ghana. Everyone keeps on saying hello, Afia.’ Afia and her mother live in a privately rented property within South-East London where I met them in 2016. However, in August 2018, they moved out of London due to the high rent cost. Afia is sad that they are leaving, she says: ‘I will miss my best friends. I wonder when next I will wear my Ghana dress on a multicultural day if I am leaving school in London.’ Afia would like to be a chef in the future because she likes cooking. However, she says most adults advise her ‘to be a doctor because I am good at maths... but I don’t want to be rich or famous. I want to do charity.’

In Ghana Ama Duku, a 13-year-old child migrant, moved from a village in Esaase-Bontefufuo to Kumasi. In the village, she walked long hours to school, and after school, she rushes to the farm to join her mother in weeding. My London-based respondent, Geraldine, a 56-year-old woman, met Ama Duku in 2014 when she visited Ghana. Ama Duku often fetched water for her due to water-flow irregularities. My interaction with Geraldine proved that she pitied Ama after listening to her village life experience. Ama Duku refers to Geraldine as her ‘mother.’ Four years after she met Geraldine, she has become a member of a transnational family with imaginings and future hope of joining her ‘family’ in London and also to attend university or work. She sends biblical and motivational messages to Geraldine every morning. She changes her WhatsApp profile picture to that of Geraldine or Stella - whom she has never met - regularly and occasionally including on Mother’s Day, with messages such as ‘Sweet Mother’ and ‘My Sweet Sister’. Ama currently lives and does caretaking tasks, including cleaning, at Geraldine’s house in Kumasi.

In 2017, while walking with Rosemary (25– 35 years, retail shop attendant) in London, she giggled over a bank’s billboard with the inscription: ‘there is no place like home...helping home buyers for over 160 years’, and remarked, ‘they have a picture of a

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<sup>1</sup> Dialect of the Akan language mostly spoken in southern and central Ghana

young person on the signboard but how many have the money to buy a house?'. The housing expectations of Rosemary have been unachievable due to multiple factors including low income, the rising cost of housing and also the increasing financialisation of the process of securing a house. She notes:

*'[I] am okay at the moment staying with my father but I'll rather have my own house or flat or something. My bank didn't agree with the price the housing agency wanted so I was stuck in the middle and I just had to pull out but that was the last bid that needed to be done, just agreeing on the plan and both were saying no so I had to pull out. But it is seeming to be difficult because my income doesn't allow me to get a mortgage or enough for a mortgage to buy a property in London.'*

Meanwhile, Rosemary feels so long as she is 'stuck' in her parent's house she has to do 'girls work' and her father will always try to control her 'going out and coming' time. In Ghana, I met Rosemary's cousin, John (20-24 years, Accra, Unemployed graduate) who takes care of Rosemary's father's house. His caretaking tasks also includes sending them money in London. Whenever Rosemary is in Ghana she stays in that house.

Jerry (25–35 years) 'struggled' with his 'identity as a child of a Ghanaian immigrant' in London and therefore he co-founded an organisation called 'From Ghana.' The organisation currently undertakes programmes including award ceremonies for young Ghanaians living abroad and a weekend professional social networking and skills training for young British-Ghanaians. He travels to Ghana annually to organise a business mentoring programme with a private university. While Jerry is based in London, his organisation has branches in five other European countries and the USA; he often moves to these countries for activities including planning and fundraising. After his postgraduate education, he took paid work at his university but 'resigned to focus on his organisation while providing childcare for his first child at home.' He feels 'there are a lot of business opportunities in Ghana and Africa in general.' To him, schoolmates and church members 'are scattered across the world' and anybody he can 'trust whether Nigerian or Polish is a brother and sister.' He emphasised, trust as a more critical element of social relationships and he illustrates this by a previous experience: 'some time ago in 2015, I felt I could count on

family relations in Ghana for a project I was doing, but they misused the money and were telling me stories.’

Most current research that focuses on everyday life during and after the Global Financial Crisis (GFC), does not consider the transnational complexities suggested in the vignettes above. Rather they focus on family life trajectories within the UK and other western countries as cited earlier. While on the one hand, a segment of literature has focused on economic precarity and how British families are Just About Managing (JAM) or ‘getting by’ (Ridge, 2013; Hall, 2016; O’Brien & Kyprianou, 2017), the migration literature has mainly focused on prospects of return mobility and the impact of falls in remittances (Mohapatra and Ratha, no date; Bastia, 2011).

Migration and ‘life’s work’ aimed at meeting social reproduction needs are closely connected (Mitchell, Marston and Katz, 2012). For most poor people in developing countries as well as those who want to maintain a middle-class lifestyle, migration has become a common strategy as household members *must* mobilise economic resources to meet the increasing cost of living (Coe, 2014). In advanced countries, while social welfare is available, each policy shift in the past decade has inched towards shrinking social services investment. With welfare changes, immigrants and their children are likely to be affected, yet they are often understudied in scholarly work on the crisis’ effects. Moreover, children of migrants whether in origin or destination countries are also often ignored in the conceptual and theoretical analysis in this context. Generally, analysis of migration in the context of an economic crisis seems to have failed to theorise transnational networks in relation to social fields and the household as a unit in social reproduction processes.

While undertaking fieldwork, research respondents demonstrated a ‘greater sense of embeddedness in the transnational social field’ (Schiller & Levitt 2004:13; Schiller 2005) and networks through transnational material social and economic practices as discussed across the empirical Chapters of this thesis. On the one hand, practices such as sending remittances, phone calls or visits to places were easier and quicker in the age of globalisation (Vertovec, 2009). On the other hand, collective and individual ‘everyday activities and relationships’ were highly ‘influenced by multiple set[s] of laws and institutions’ (Schiller & Levitt 2004:1010). This included, for instance, public disinvestment, new policies or legislative instruments on housing, family reunification and care (Government of UK, 2014; Gibb, 2015; Gower, 2015; Bowling and Westenra, 2018).

There is no doubt that since the economic crisis and within the past decade the immigration landscape has changed to be more restrictive and neoliberal globalisation has deepened as noted in Chapter 4 of this research. This, therefore, pinpointed the possibility that people are forging new ‘ways of being and belonging’ (Schiller and Levitt, 2004) within ‘transnational social fields’ – a term Basch, Glick-Schiller and Blanc (1994:8) conceptualised to suggest ‘multi-stranded social relations that link places of origin and settlement.’ Building on the work of Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc (1994), Schiller and Levitt (2004:1009) defined social field within transnational migration ‘as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organised, and transformed.’

Despite the embeddedness of families in transnational social fields, often there is the belief that adults are the main social actors in Ghanaian transnational migration processes. In other words, with few exceptions, children are invisible; they are not the central unit of conceptual underpinnings and analysis. Perhaps this may be due to the theoretical underpinnings of ‘immigration’ studies that focused on how children of migrant parent’s integrated or adopted the values of destination countries (Castles, 2007). Regarding Ghanaian transnational migration studies, apart from Coe (2014) and Valentina Mazzucato et al., (2015) which both make significant contributions to understanding transnational childhoods, most research focuses on parent’s as the main transnational social and economic actors, portraying children as ‘the luggage’ of parental migrants, or ‘victims’ and passive ‘dependents’ of globalisation (Orellana et al. 2001: 578; Crivello 2015:39). The mere fact that parents invest and sacrifice to secure a ‘better life’ for themselves and their children underscores how central children and childhoods should be to our analysis of migration and social reproduction (Orellana et al. 2001; Parreñas 2005; Coe 2011b). Moreover, the majority of existing studies focus on micro factors, with little to no analysis of structural factors and how they shape children’s everyday lives. Contrary to the invisibilised and passive child, children are not necessarily passive in the migration process (Orellana *et al.*, 2001); they are active social actors who create and define the meaning of their migration experience or that of their parents as I will indicate in this thesis. This thesis, therefore, contributes to theoretical debates in transnational migration studies that emphasises social and economic relations, as well as practices between migrants and non-migrants across local and globalised social fields, as people perform everyday ‘life’s work’ (Mitchell, Marston



and Katz, 2012). Moreover, I focus on children and young people's local and transnational experiences to underscore their status as social actors in the migration process and how they influence transnational social fields.

The research is situated in the discipline of childhood studies that have so far benefited from other disciplines including sociology, geography and anthropology in theorising childhood (James and Prout, 1997; Qvortrup, 2005; Wells, 2009). Sociology of childhood aims to theorise childhood as a historical, social and cultural phenomenon (James and Prout, 1990; James, Jenks and Prout, 1998; James and James, 2004). Furthermore, it highlights children's role and experiences in society while bringing attention to the childhood diversity which is often shaped by social spaces (James and Prout, 1990; Prout, 2005; Qvortrup, 2005). Depending on the environment that children grow up in, age, and gender, discursive social practices, beliefs and cultural contexts can reveal childhood diversity and whether children are considered as an asset or a burden while responding to certain definitional childhood practices (e.g. care).

In this thesis, I draw on original data that I collected over a 13-month period within a transnational framework to investigate the impact of the economic crisis on social reproduction processes among Ghanaian transnational families. Specifically, the study investigated: how economic crisis reduces family resources and what the impacts of this are on children and other young people's life course; how economic crisis influences the daily work of reproduction, transnational practices and the maintenance of social relations within the transnational social field and how these, in turn, (re)shapes the social field; and how the transnational family sustains its reproductive needs through various socially embedded material practices in times of economic crisis.

From a conceptual and methodological standpoint, I focus on children as significant social actors in transnational migration and social reproduction processes. Based on the social constructionist view, I acknowledge that childhood can be constructed through children and other young people's transnational perspective. This can be based on historical experiences or present conditions. Parental perspectives are also analysed along with young people's status, given that parent's situation and perspectives are likely to have an impact on young people's lives and how they relate transnationally. Comparing intragenerational experiences also allow this thesis to reveal the shifts in relations of production and practices of social reproduction over time and across space.

As noted earlier, Ama Duku makes claims on a woman and her daughter in London interpellating them as ‘sweet mother’ and ‘sweet sister’ respectively. In London, Afia also speaks about her emotional affection for her ‘grandmother’ and friends in Ghana due to separation. Likewise, in London Jerry also refers to other young people as his ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ including non-Ghanaians. What is common in the encounters of these people is how they are ‘doing family’ beyond kin relations. Relations are forged across local and globalised social fields amid constraints and opportunities as discussed in this thesis. At the same time, most of the adults I interviewed base their actions on an ethics of care and ‘good motherhood’ and ‘good childhood’ which may not be necessarily fulfilled in the UK at certain time periods. Thus, they rework their parental obligations through certain practices. Amid child circulation, children stay in contact with parents while at a distance. As they move between places, the status of social networks shifts and with them their emotional or affective significance. Young people grow up looking to achieve certain social expectations including work, marriage and housing and for some, fulfilling these sometimes results in stretching and reconstituting childhoods and social fields. To explain this, I apply a critical transnational countertopographical lens which has the potential of bringing into focus the spatial dimension as well as the interconnected and simultaneous effects of policies and globalised capitalist production. While reworking everyday life’s work may signify localised effects of policies and disruptions in social reproduction within transnational households, material social practices that transcend the nation state’s borders underscore globalised sensitivities.

### **The transnational household or transnational family? Does it matter?**

The terms ‘transnational family’ and ‘global householding’ as used in the transnational migration literature have served to conceptualise migrants’ transnational behaviours and maintenance of family formations across borders. Families in which parents or children become migrants at a point are known as ‘transnational families’ (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002: 3). They may live separately at different places and yet maintain a ‘feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely familyhood, even across national borders’ (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002: 3). On the other hand, a global household is defined as comprising the people who migrate, people who are born into or otherwise incorporated into the immigrant household (e.g. through marriage or cohabitation) and people left behind in the origin country (Douglass, 2013, 2014). Both terms underscore globalised social reproduction and

the displacement of social reproduction cost<sup>2</sup> as households adjust to the migration as a household member (Hochschild, 2000; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2014). However, while transnational ‘familyhood’ tends to emphasise the social and emotional capacity of the family, the global household stresses how the movement of people requires the household as a space of production and consumption to adapt to new ways of functioning materially. For the purpose of this thesis, both terms will be used interchangeably. However, in certain contexts, ‘transnational household’ will be used because of its explanatory potential for understanding the incorporation of ‘other children’ and other people (e.g. family friends) who may not necessarily be kin-members of a family but critical in social reproduction processes. As suggested by Mahler (1998:82) in migration studies it is important to recognise the various ‘players’ involved in the migration process. This suggests the need to move beyond the dominant focus of migration studies on the role of kin-relations, to reflect on the contribution of non-kin social relations in social reproduction processes within Ghanaian transnational households. Moreover, the choice of household and processes is also to underscore the significance of the intra-/inter-family relationships or ties as children or young people circulate between houses as noted in Chapters 5 and 6. For instance, in Chapter 6, housing is discussed beyond the notions of physical structure. As a social space, the significant role interconnected relationships forged by young people within houses including domestic work, the symbolic meaning of a migrant house and young people’s life transitions as linked to sharing and homeownership is discussed. To local and transnational children, older people may appear as ‘new members of their network’ of parents, grandparents or sisters as noted in Chapter 5 as they move between houses contributing to ‘householding’ amid social reproduction disruptions caused by factors such as poverty in Ghana or increased exploitation within capitalist relations of production (e.g. inadequate income or time to provide the needed care in western countries as seen in the vignette of Afia). Similarly, ‘other children’ such as Ama are incorporated and proactively perform activities that sustain transnational networks in addition to their local domestic activities. By managing migrant capital assets in origin countries as seen in Chapter 6, young people are

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<sup>2</sup> By social reproduction I refer to ‘the interdependent reproduction both of the social relations within which, and the materials and discursive means through which, social life is premised, sustained and transformed over time’ (Lee, 2000:760) or ‘material and social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis’ (Katz, 2001: 711).

actively involved in transnational householding arrangements in ways that have often gone unrecognised.

When children are involved in local or globalised social reproduction either as people performing daily household reproduction or receiving care from others, they form ties across different places where they are recognised as family or household members. Research completed by many international development agencies often project children who are not with their biological parents as ‘at risk’ of migration. They are labelled as ‘children left-behind’ vulnerable ‘psychological impacts’ and multiple adversities of parental migration (De La Garza, 2010:9). As noted by Wells (2013), representations are some of the melodramatic modes used to project a sense of neglect and also to provoke emotional reactions that justify specific agenda-setting. During the period of my research, I discovered both children and caregivers and other research informants did not have the term ‘left-behind’ or ‘abandoned child’ in their language or everyday practices. In fact, when I first met Ama Duku and asked her, how she met her London-based ‘fictive’ mother, initially, she was very upset and replied, ‘where is that question from.’ To Ama, being the ‘daughter of mama Geraldine’ or someone she referred to as her mother meant I asked an unnecessary question. Rather in my subsequent interactions with her, she emphasised ‘her role as an obedient and hardworking daughter who responds to her mother’s directives and needs including everything from running errands or taking care of Geraldine’s house’ (Field notebook, 2016). Geraldine, her mother in the UK equally described her as a ‘good child’ and provided social support, care or maintained regular contact with her.

The family, as an institution is deemed the cornerstone of Ghanaian society. Family principles of entrustment, reciprocity, relationality and care ethics (Wong, 2006; Awumbila *et al.*, 2008; Coe, 2011c, 2012) has often served to keep families together even when they are scattered through migration. For instance, Coe (2012:916) observed from her study that the inter-generational practice ‘of responsibility and social reproduction of families’ means that ‘families can be sustained by reciprocal relations in hard economic times.’ This raises important concerns regarding how migrants negotiate demands based on reciprocity when they experience economic challenges. During my research, I discovered that care was sometimes passed on other extended family relations (e.g. uncles, cousins, aunts and grandparents), or redistributed to older children including younger in-laws of married couples. In Ghana, it is often said that while biological parents contribute to the genetics of

the child, it is the society that shapes the child to be a responsible and good citizen or future leader as he or she encounters various people (e.g. aunties, uncles, adults or community leaders) and institutions (e.g. school, church) throughout life (Nukunya, 2003). Thus, most children feel society and the family unit have a responsibility of meeting their needs, thus choose to forge new networks or maintain existing networks. In fact, as a researcher, I was often interpellated as ‘uncle’ or ‘brother’ by my child respondents and their parents.

Network formations and movement are not exclusive to adults; certain young people move as part of their identity formation and life transitions. As noted in Chapter 4 in the construction of the culture of migration, young people’s mobility is connected to social status and the transition from childhood into adulthood. Similarly, for young people in advanced countries like the UK, neoliberal capitalist globalisation offers an opportunity to leverage their cultural capital for economic capital accumulation. In this study, children and young people’s daily life encounters at various social fields including work, home and church suggest that they are not just consumers but also producers and players in globalising products. For instance, as non-migrants, they may receive goods from abroad, when returning from family visits they may carry cultural artefacts or learn a local languages, they may trade in local cultural materials across space and at various sites and from trusted networks with ‘brothers’ and ‘sisters’ from diverse backgrounds based on a sense of family. The flow of cultural products like Kente for instance from one location to the other for commercial purposes indicates children do not simply internalise society and culture, but rather they actively contribute to cultural (re)production (Corsaro, 2005). To put it in another way, drawing on the benefits of globalisation (e.g. technology), they become ‘transglobal’ and not just transnational, which as I argue reorients or ‘stretches’ the transnational social field and social reproduction processes beyond the usual two nation-state analysis.

Within structural constraints, normative concerns regarding how to procure a ‘good childhood’ and ‘good mothering’ become contested across ‘critical topographies’ (Katz, 2001:721). For issues, concerning who and where to provide good care for children are some of the choices that parents make as discussed in this thesis. Apart from the ethics of care, the consequence on older children’s gender relations is another understudied area despite the effects of power relations related to patriarchy (Bourdieu, 1984). Gender roles, power dynamics and household relations may experience shifts. This has implications for

migration decisions, remittance behaviour, and migration outcomes. Earlier on, Wong (2006:376) illustrated that highly patriarchal family household practices allow men to exercise greater autonomy than women. Generally, Ghanaian tradition frames care as women's responsibility and as such girls' everyday life work and child-rearing practices are expected to facilitate learning, knowledge acquisition and eventual membership into an idealised girlhood or womanhood. Moreover, the matrilineal kinship system allows the mother and her extended family control over their children, which to some degree ensures women's economic security from their children (Nukunya, 2003; Owusu, 2013). Given that both boys and girls are objects and agents of economic and socialisation processes, this raises questions about how some of these cultural norms are challenged or reinforced when families encounter economic changes. The household inequalities where for instance young girls feel 'stuck' and other girls bear the burden or cost of redistributed life's work is discussed across the Chapters. The findings are consistent with adult's gender relations in capitalist production and reproduction contexts discussed in the work of Elson(2012).

### **Revisiting the relationship between social reproduction and migration**

Every society and its people need to reproduce themselves through life's work. Social reproduction is, as Katz's puts it, everyday 'life work' which involves 'material and social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis' (Katz 2001:711). Common aspects of social reproduction include food provision, safety and shelter, clothing, child and elderly care, healthcare, emotional or affective labour, education, food production and, laundry and cleaning, shopping, participation in religious and civic activities, daily paperwork, social networking, household maintenance, etc.

Migration reconfigures family relations, causing new ways of managing families and in 'life's work' towards meeting everyday needs. In some cases, this may involve reconfiguration of the household as the locus of production and social reproduction. Unfavourable state policies and relations of production may inform labour's decision to relocate childcare needs to the parent's home country (Katz 2004: 31-2), raising concerns about paid and unpaid work (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2001a, 2005a).

Bearing in mind the significant contribution of these scholars, the concept of social reproduction has largely focused on adults' transnational perspectives. Even when children have featured in analysis, dominant terms such as 'mothering from a distance' (Parreñas, 2001a), 'transnational mothering' (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997) and 'global care

chains' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003) have often unintentionally made children and their role in social reproduction less visible. Correspondingly, the use of the concept as deduced from the literature suggest that transnational social reproduction with respect to the Africa-Europe migration social field and therefore British-Ghana transnational children has been underresearched. The governance of social reproduction that targets reproductive places (e.g. the family) is critical to understanding and theorising childhoods and how they are being produced across time and space.

Whether people move or stay behind they are involved in everyday 'life work.' For children and young people waking up daily to attend school and the world around them shapes their aspirations regarding 'getting ahead' and 'making it.' For instance, in Chapter 4, I discuss not only the aspirations and desires of young people in relation to accessing education but also how travelling to 'abroad' or *Abrokyire* is an important function of their life transition goals of higher education, employment and capital accumulation. In the work of Coe, she discusses non-migrant children's imagined mobilities and aspirations of going abroad (2012). However, my work contributes to the theorisation of how migration comes about in Ghana and the taken for granted assumption that children in transnational families will definitely join their parents. As discussed extensively in Chapter 4 of this thesis, despite their aspirations, young people face critical barriers – some of which are direct outcomes of neoliberal globalisation - which affect their ability to accomplish migration trajectories; governance of migration, including who moves and who is not permitted to move are all important in the theorisation of transnational childhoods. Similarly, gendered mobilities which reinforce intersectional identities including how young people come to think of themselves as boys/men who are 'stronger' and how they see girls/women as 'weaker.' In Chapter 4, I discuss how girls' mobilities may be controlled than boys. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7, some of these gendered norms have been reinforced due to young people's emplacement within globalised social spaces and intensely exploitative capitalist relations (including poor working conditions and income) which has been a key feature of modern societies like the UK. As evident in this thesis, certain British-Ghanaian transnational children have 'come of age' and are trapped in low income and insecure jobs. Some feel 'stuck' in their parent's home. Additionally, these young people's everyday 'life work' is equally significant in terms of constructing who they are, how they think of themselves and what they can accomplish in society. For instance, amid growing economic

uncertainty, some British-Ghanaian transnational youth and young adults involved in my research could be described as people who think of themselves as neoliberal subjects and transglobal; they are global consumers and producers as well as risk-takers. They consider 'everywhere' as 'home' and for work and they leverage their cultural and social capital for further capital accumulation in an increasingly globalised world as discussed in Chapter 7.

While social reproduction as theorised in the context of migration is not new, its application in the context of my research is different in two ways: First, it is considered in the context of changing political-economic conditions within which the transnational families that I studied find themselves. For instance, the majority of parents and young people in the UK noted how the commodification of childcare and privatisation of social housing affected their life trajectories. Consequently, reproductive costs are redistributed or shifted to other places as discussed in Chapter 5 and 6 in the context of children and parental migration and mobility trajectories within and outside the UK. As noted by Katz, amid structural economic changes, it is essential to understand the critical topographies created and the disruptions and displacement in social reproduction's cost of certain places, thereby revealing the nature of 'vagabond capitalism' and its effects on social relations of production and reproduction (Katz, 2001). Equally significant is how households reproduce themselves, what they become or do as well as power relations and inequalities that are produced in labour's encounters with capital or the state. In essence, it is not enough to understand migration and remittance patterns, but more importantly what and who is involved in the *processes* of moving and well as the forms of social relationships or ties as young people and adult survive economic constraints as argued in Chapter 5, 6 and 7. Furthermore, the fact that young people have 'come of age' and are expected to achieve certain social status (e.g. marriage, employment, etc.) is vital in understanding how capitalist relations (e.g. low income) and financialisation of social reproduction affects their identity construction. The constraint that young people face and how they negotiate the constraints embedded in age and time, as well as cultural norms and social spaces needs to be understood in terms of construction of childhood and youth life transitions into adulthood.

Technological advancements, affordable transport and communication have facilitated economic integration, social networks maintenance as well as flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, ideas, and people - perhaps to a lesser extent - across borders (Parreñas, 2001a; Stiglitz, 2002; Vertovec, 2004a). Through various means (e.g. phone calls



and text messages), migrants and non-migrants are connected more than ever to avoid family breakdown (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). In the era of ‘instant messaging’ and ‘on-demand services’, I discuss ‘new’ and ‘stretched’ reproductive sociospatial spaces and also how young people use technology to cultivate and maintain ties as noted in Chapter 5 and 7.

In summary, as contemporary households engage in ‘life’s work,’ on a daily basis they encounter certain political-economic constraints or opportunities. These changes in the age of neoliberalism and globalisation affect the ability to meet social reproduction needs. In this context, there is the need to understand how children and their significant relations embedded in transnational social fields survive or manage constraints. In other words, how does neoliberal globalisation affect material social practices of care and capital accumulation through work ‘here’ and ‘there’ (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). So far social reproduction in the context of neoliberal globalisation and children’s role in that has been under-theorised

### **Inequalities: temporality, the life-course, history and generation and transnationality**

Focusing on children and other young people reflects life’s temporality within the transnational social field. In the context of this research, a young person who was 10 years old at the start of the global financial crisis would be about 21 years old in 2019. For young people, growing up and coming of age in the past decade suggests critical life trajectories shaped by their emplacement in globalised social spaces.

Elder (1998:302) theorised life-course as a ‘pattern of socially defined, age – graded events and roles which is subject to historical change in culture and social structure.’ In transnational migration research, this is significant considering the simple fact that in most societies, discursive elements of childhood, families and government policies are constructed in relation to child-to-adult transitions where an individual is expected to experience certain life events such as education, work, and marriage among others with respect to time as discussed in Chapter 6 when using homeownership and housing relations as markers of adulthood(Prout, 2005).

Focusing on individual life course principles – that is time, place, linked-lives and human agency (Elder, 1994) reveals the contradictions between capitalist production, historical family migration trajectories and social reproduction. For instance, in Chapter 6, in applying a comparative historical account between young migrants who have become

parent's and their children who have come of age, British-Ghanaian transnational youth/young adults are constrained by the housing crisis and poor job outcomes. At the same time, some young people express agential competence in leveraging various forms of capital that had different 'use value' across generations with respect to time and place (Bourdieu, 1984).

When poor and working-class parents experience poor employment conditions, it affects children's lives depending on their emplacement within the social field. For instance, Afia's mother's ability to afford commoditised care and her personal ethics of care and motherhood informed her decision to send Afia to Ghana. By this, the cost of social reproduction was shifted from the UK to Ghana. This clearly indicates the linked-lives impact (between parent and child) and also the transnational effects of the crisis from a critical topographies perspective where welfare reforms in the UK affect not only children in the UK, but also those social relations who will provide foster care (whether paid or unpaid) in Ghana. Likewise, young people like Ama Duku, Adwoa and John in Chapter 5 and 6 respectively demonstrate their agency in terms of care, network formation and also reverse remittances which are all critical to the conceptualisation of young people's local and transnational practices in survival strategies; an area which has been largely theorised based on adult's perspectives. In Chapter 6, the linked-lives experiences among co-tenants in shared living arrangements and how the cost of care is negotiated with young women is also significant in understanding the intragenerational and gendered inequalities which has largely been ignored in the literature on the economic crisis (Elson, 2010). The fact that some children had to stay home for others to go to school due to lack of money to afford privatised education as noted in Chapter 5 also suggest the how poor parent's conditions impacts on children (Locke & Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011:1148). Additionally, dealing with transnational families that maintain ties across geographies draws attention to 'place'. During my fieldwork interactions, children, young people and adults often compared Ghana with the UK and other places that they have visited and what these places mean. As noted in Chapter 5, aside from economic categorisation of countries like the UK as advanced or developed, most Ghanaians felt Ghana was also highly advanced morally and socially than the UK. These distinctions were based on cultural notions of good childhood or successful childhood from a socially-constructed perspective (Wells 2009, Dornan & Woodhead 2015:11) and challenges accepted binary constructions of origin or developing countries and

destination countries that represent economically advanced countries as ‘better’ in comparison to countries in the Global South.

Assimilation theorists suggest that transnational ties get weaker with immigrant generation’s successive integration in destination countries. Researching children based on assimilation and ethnic identity can be problematic, given that young people’s identities change over time. The depth of their ethnic ties and identities may shift or are reconstructed at different times depending on the opportunities and constraints encountered as noted in Chapter 7. In the context of this research, young people are not necessarily concerned with a particular ethnic identity as they ‘grow up’ and ‘go global’. Their life’s work may be linked to ‘everywhere that feels like home’ as detailed in Chapter 7. Again, young people construct a more transglobal relationship with people and places beyond the usual origin and destination country binary discourse.

### **The meaning of crisis**

Historical use of the term ‘crisis’ in international development, political economy debates and in the narratives of my respondents revealed two significant junctures. That is the 1980’s era of Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) in developing countries such as Ghana and most recently the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis which began in the USA with ripple effects on European countries including the UK. The events had localised and global ramifications such as rising food prices, decreased state welfare provision (Haylett, 2003; Richardson, 2010; Posen, 2012; Ridge, 2013), youth unemployment/underemployment, xenophobic attacks on migrants, decline in migrant remittances in certain migration corridors, new immigration reforms and immobility, irregular migration and death at sea and return migration to their origin countries (Mohapatra and Ratha, no date; Awad, 2009; Bastia, 2011; Ghosh, 2011).

Principally, the use of the term ‘crisis’ in this thesis relates to the multiple successive political-economic changes that have taken place in Ghana or the UK. Following the 2007-8 financial crisis, the UK government established austerity and welfare reforms in 2010 as a policy response for economic recovery and growth. After that, immigration policy reform, including £18,600 financial requirement to bring dependents to the UK, was instituted in 2012. Also, the UK’s social housing has been privatised in many places. Meanwhile, neoliberal globalised development agenda persist under the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) directives (including a freeze in public sector employment and a

general reduction in government spending) in Ghana. Ultimately, austerity and neoliberalism have contributed to financialisation, commodification and privatisation with potential effects on household capacity to reproduce itself and people's economic, emotional and affective behaviour. To further clarify the above mentioned political-economic events and the effects on families in both 'advanced' and 'developing' countries, I applied Cindy Katz's idea of 'counter-topographies' to a transnational context. Development processes are often riddled with capitalist interest. Governments develop policies and strategies, but increasingly the private sector is expected to service social reproduction process (e.g. through such things as providing care facilities, housing, employment creation and private education) amidst public disinvestment. The process in itself is often more complicated; the owners of the means of production may, for instance, build or manage a school or housing, but they could increase or push the cost on families. Likewise, exploitative working conditions by firm managers or owners means workers may not be 'gainfully' employed with desired income and welfare benefits despite working long hours. After graduating from school, young people may be unemployed or underemployed for a while, thereby not reaping the economic gains of investment in their education. Amid these conditions, governments continue to serve the interest of capitalist's production. Consequently, the household practices and expectations of social reproduction are disrupted as people *must* continue to meet the needs of their reproduction, whether physically together or separated across borders.

Crises occur at different points in time. Thus, some generational differences are noted across the Chapters. For instance, the older generation of Ghanaians emphasised structural adjustment policies' effects while young people highlighted neoliberal interventions as discussed in Chapter 4, 6 and 7. Consequently, some Ghanaians have already moved to other countries for a 'better life', others aspire to move. But as both Ghanaians in Ghana and in the UK are facing different forms of crisis or multiple crises, it seems the notion of 'migration for better life' becomes a highly contested one as I have noted in this thesis.

In summary, households experience a continuum of crisis across their life course in different local and global scales due to political-economic problems. These constraints create a crisis of social reproduction which equally alters the household-based practices and how social reproduction is accomplished.

### **Methodological innovations: multi-sited ethnographic techniques**

Researching transnational families, including those on the move and those who stay behind, proved complex. It, therefore, demanded techniques that would enable me to understand their transnational practices and perspectives within translocal and globalised social spaces. More importantly, as discussed in the methodology and literature review Chapters, children and childhoods have not been the central unit of analysis in understanding the effects of the crisis. Perhaps this may also have been the cause or the effect of the taken for granted mantra of voices of children and youth (James, 2007). Consequently, a careful effort was made at ensuring that children are properly researched as discussed extensively in my methodology Chapter. By this, I also considered children as competent research subjects who deserved to be properly researched to avoid further invisibilising them (James, 2007:261; Beazley *et al.*, 2009).

Multi-sited ethnographic research allowed me to understand the historical, cultural, economic and social context of not only the UK as a destination country but also the contextual matters of Ghana as an origin country. In this regard, my thesis offers an innovative approach to how we conceptualise transnational practices and migration processes. For instance, everyday life encounters allowed me to understand the ‘migration environment’ thereby enabling me to bring context to my research respondent’s narratives. Essentially, bringing context to narratives allowed me to move beyond dominant ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors that have shaped Ghana’s migration policy and programming into applying the aspiration-ability model to understand migration dynamics as discussed in Chapter 4. The aspiration-ability allows us to understand the complexities of Ghanaian emigration from an intersectional approach and how to potentially address inequalities surrounding children and youth migration. Additionally, the notion of ‘critical topography’, methodologically complements the multi-sited approach applied in this thesis; it reveals translocal practices that counter globalised capitalism and exploitative condition as they encounter social reproduction. In this context, critical topography helps in analysing and understanding the effects of globalisation and economic crisis on material and household practices by which place is created and its significance.

Conducting fieldwork in London initially and tracing relations of my London-based respondent’s in Ghana made it easier to develop trust and rapport during the fieldwork in Ghana. This was because my London-based respondents had already spoken with their

relations in Ghana even before I met them. As I noted in my methodology, there are some cultural barriers to opening up on matters that Ghanaians find shameful including poverty, etc. However, as trust developed children, young people and adults opened up to me. Similarly, as I had already interacted with relations in London, I was able to ask more relevant questions and also bring meaning to the perspectives of non-migrant relations in Ghana. Most research on migration is often done over a fairly short period. The relatively long period of data collection across multiple sites also allowed me to further develop my argument on how economic changes impact young people's life course (unfolding lives) and migration patterns. For instance, while I interviewed some children and their parents in London in 2016, the impact of the housing crisis would not have become more meaningful if I had not followed up on them in 2017 when they moved out of London. In this thesis, I use the term migration *processes* to underscore the importance of understanding not only the pre-migration stage but also the series of movements or flows that connect people to Ghana and other places.

While participatory research-friendly techniques have been recommended in empowering children and addressing power imbalances, my research encounters in Ghana also drew my attention to the need to pay attention to cultural values and the ethos of various sites that have become useful in gathering data with children. Full participation in working with children may be difficult to achieve as research *with* children, as pointed out by James et al. (1998). Consequently, in my methodology, I highlight the need to be conscious of taking for granted *places where children are* and equating them to *children's places*.

Lastly, my multiple subjective position (e.g. as an adult, immigrant, Ashanti, etc.), how it shifted as I encountered children and migrants themselves and how I addressed research dilemmas reflexively are some of the issues that I discuss in my methodology Chapter.

### **Thesis overview**

After this introductory Chapter, the thesis follows with a literature review on the issues of transnational migration and childhoods, economic crisis, and social reproduction that are critical to understanding how families relate across borders, how children are constituted in the discourse on transnationalism and social reproduction, and how crises are governed (Chapter 2). Following insights gained from the literature review, including on how children and childhoods have been represented and constructed in migration studies, I

was inspired to apply a multi-sited ethnographic approach in understanding transnational childhoods. Subsequently, drawing on fieldwork encounters, I discuss and reflect on the methodological and ethical dilemmas and the implications for transnational migration research with children and families as well as giving a full account of my research method and theoretical framing (Chapter 3). In Chapter 4, I delve into Ghanaian migration processes and how migration comes about and what influences young people's migration aspirations. My analysis reveals some of the barriers and constraints young people face which negatively impacts their migration aspirations and their ability to move. That being said, there are some middle-class youth who are able to move and thus I emphasise the need to address underlying inequalities within the migration environment.

Subsequent Chapters analyse how crisis impacted on young people's life course. Thus, while I focus on children and adolescent's migration patterns and reproductive roles in Chapter 5, in Chapter 6 and 7 I discuss housing and transitions to work which are important adulthood markers for the British-Ghanaian transnational youth and young adulthood who have come of age. Chapter 5 focuses on children and young people based in Ghana, their migration patterns and social reproductive roles within transnational households. The Chapter also underscores how the struggle between the state, labour and capital over who meets the costs of social reproduction, including the commodification of childcare results in the shifting of the cost of childcare to Ghana through return migration of British-Ghanaian transnational children. Chapter 6 focuses on the housing trajectories of transnational families. Here I explore the meanings of housing beyond physical structure to consider young people's subjective and social identities within transnational houses and their neighbourhood. Chapter 7 discusses transitions to work and how young people come to think of themselves as neoliberal subjects. Amid structural constraints, these young people draw on both social and cultural capital by leveraging on opportunities within globalised social spaces. The thesis concludes in Chapter 8, where I discuss the wider implications of my research in the context of the social and cultural construction of childhood as well as transnational families embedded in social fields. Here, I note the emergence of transglobal childhoods and youth identities as young people engage in various practices in local and globalised social fields. In this context, I suggest that children and young people are active social agents in transnational social fields. Their local and transnational practices and increasingly globalised aspirations must be constructed beyond the traditional dichotomies

of origin and destination countries. Moreover, the social and cultural construction of childhood practices, shapes and is shaped by the transnational field and the transnational families in that field.



## Chapter 2

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### **Literature Review: Transnational Migration and Childhood, Social Reproduction and Economic Crisis**

As human mobility has become a central aspect of many people's strategies for improving their lives, so have fluid family dynamics and children's roles in migration become key to life advancement strategies. People move for various reasons, including for improved employment conditions, training or education, new experiences, family reunification, or safety and security. Parental migration impacts on children who may accompany their parents or stay behind with a parent or relative. Children themselves may also migrate alone. Migration, therefore, tends to reconfigure families and how they live together as a household across space. Despite the dearth of data on children and childhoods in the context of transnational migration, scholarly research also suggests that children are not necessarily passive in this migration process; they are active social actors who create and define the meaning of their migration experience and that of their parents (Coe, 2013; Dona & Veale, 2014; Parreñas, 2005a; Punch, 2007c).

Parents – or families – move, or at least have the intention of moving, with the aim of improving their lives and also that of their social relations including children and extended family members. Migration is often undertaken due to insufficient resources in origin countries, perceived greater economic conditions elsewhere and future aspirations amid poor structural economic conditions at home. Yet, economies in the developed world also experience economic downturns in the form of economic recessions or financial crises, to which migrants are likely to also be vulnerable to. Thus, these economic crises can disrupt the material resources and social practices that facilitate social reproduction within a family. These factors also underscore how non-Western countries remain vulnerable to crisis conditions, particularly in an interdependent and interconnected world. The 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) is regarded as the world's worst economic recession since the Great Depression era.<sup>3</sup> Whilst the GFC originated in the Global North, specifically in Wall Street

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<sup>3</sup> Multiple crises have occurred since the 1930 Great Depression (e.g. the Latin America and East Asia financial crises in the mid-1990s as well as the Ethiopian Crisis of 1999–2000 (Hammond and Maxwell, 2002)), however, these are outside the scope of my research.

in the USA and in the City of London in the UK, the effects have been felt by many countries in the Global South in three main areas: trade, remittances, and financial credit (Arguello, 2010; Elson, 2010) – all of which have implications for everyday life.

As noted in the introduction (Chapter 1) to this dissertation, this literature review grew out of my initial interest in understanding how the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis affected transnational migrants and their coping strategies. Parallel to this, Mohapatra & Ratha (n.d.) in a World Bank report noted a sense of resilience in migrant remittance, even in periods of economic downturn. Scholars who have explored migration in the context of economic crises seem to not have theorised migration trajectories and transnational practices in times of crisis adequately. Existing research under-theorises how economic crises and its governance, through measures such as austerity, financialisation and monetisation, impact on transnational family and global households' daily life and social reproduction and the critical place of children and childhoods in these processes.

This Chapter reviews the current state of literature on the issues of transnational migration and childhoods, economic crisis, and social reproduction that are critical to understanding how families relate across borders, how children are constituted in the discourse on transnationalism and social reproduction, and how crises are governed. This literature review includes both theoretical and empirical evidence and has been divided into three major sections that focus on transnational migration, children and childhoods and the GFC and its implications for social reproduction. I conclude that the existing literature does not offer us sufficient understanding of the relationship between economic crisis and ensuing governing strategies, and their impact on transnational families and childhoods from a social reproduction perspective.

### **Migration: theoretical and discursive shifts**

Ravenstein (1885, 1889), a nineteenth-century geographer developed the 'laws of migration' postulating that 'migration increases as industries and commerce develop and transport improves' (ibid.:178 cited in de Haas 2008; Schiller & Faist 2009). This seminal contribution argued that migration was primarily influenced by economic factors such as wage differentials. The initial contribution of Ravenstein has framed the theoretical input of many demographers, geographers, and economists in the 1960s to explain the economic, social and political reasons behind the movement of people. Lee's (1966) push-pull theory, neo-classical micro-migration theory, behavioural models and social systems theory

underscored micro-level causes including individual values, desires and expectations which cause movements (Faist, 2000; de Haas, 2008). Macro-level theories including neoclassical macroeconomic theory, World Systems theory, dual labour market theory, and the mobility transition model noted macro-level factors (e.g. wage differentials) which cause and perpetuate migration flows (de Haas, 2008).

However, many scholars were dissatisfied with the dominant theory due to its ahistorical and Euro-centric nature and this led to the emergence of meso-level theories (i.e. cultural and social capital theory, institutional theory, network theory, cumulative causation and the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)). These emphasised how non-economic factors, including social networks, risk reduction, and resource flow— particularly ideas – for collective interest, can equally cause or perpetuate migration ( Schiller, Basch, & Szanton Blanc, 1992; Faist, 2000; de Haas, 2008). For instance, Stark & Levhari (1982) and Katz & Stark (1986) argued that beyond the notion of ‘migration-for-improved income,’ migration is a risk-avoidance strategy families employ for resource diversification to reduce their vulnerability to negative economic events. Migration as a risk-avoidance strategy also relates to assumptions behind the NELM. It also has conceptual linkages with livelihood approaches that emerged in the 1970s among geographers, sociologists and anthropologists working in countries in the Global South that are often characterised by holding no income security, from either private or government interventions, and hence households would adopt strategies, including implicit family contracts, to insure themselves against future risks (de Haas, 2008). The premise of this livelihood strategy also underscores that ‘choice is based on (selective) access to assets, perceptions of opportunities, as well as aspirations of actors’ (de Haas 2008:36). Thus, there is some form of agency that is exhibited by the household collectively with respect to how to diversify their resources to overcome structural constraints. This, therefore, emphasises the relationship between migration and the wider social context (e.g. the role of family and community), as well as the economic development processes (e.g. (un)employment conditions). Hence, this approach has implications for what happens to migrants who are avoiding risk in their origin countries and yet may be exposed to risks such as economic crisis or austerity in destination countries. I conceptualise this as intensified risk and examine whether intensified-risk avoidance strategy is being practised in economically uncertain periods. Additionally, this thesis asks

how do migrants employ economic, cultural and social capital to secure their daily life needs within these constrained circumstances?

Having considered migration theories, it is important to explore the discursive approaches and shifts amongst scholarly disciplines, policymakers and international organisations working on migration. In this regard, there are three main shifts: a move away from ‘dual divides’; a change from migration as a problem to migration as a solution; and the input of feminist theories. First, until recently, migration research was marked by what Castles (2007:7) describes as the ‘dual divides’ in research agendas. Development studies and mainly economists, political economists, and geographers focused on responding to why and how migration takes place. Conversely, sociologists and anthropologists focused on migrants’ social, cultural and economic integration (Castles, 2007). Secondly, migration is not entirely seen as a ‘problem for economic development’, rather, it is viewed as ‘a solution’ (Schiller & Faist, 2009:4). Consequently, a migration-for-development mantra has evolved which treats migrants as development agents for both origin and destination countries, as practised in international development programme implementation and research agendas (Kapur, 2004 cited in Schiller & Faist, 2009). Northern governments and multilateral development agencies overwhelmingly drive agenda-setting for research and dialogue. This situation presents two challenges: the fact that migration research and debate continues to originate and reflect nation-state interests – particularly those powerful states – means that such research could be trapped within the problem of ‘methodological nationalism’ from the beginning (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2003; Castles, 2010:1570). Moreover, the mantra, which is often based on macroeconomic notions that Southern governments can utilise diaspora remittances and competences has often been constructed around an adult’s role, without acknowledging young people’s position in this process. Thirdly, feminist scholars have contributed knowledge on the gendered dimension of migration. Until the early 1970s, family migration research had often been explored from a male household-head perspective (Morokvasic, 1984; Boyle & Halfacree, 1999). This could be attributed to the economically biased nature of most migration theories before and during the 1990s. Feminist views on the feminisation of migration drew attention to the lack of studies on migration’s gendered nature and therefore women’s roles in decision making. However, despite the aforementioned changes, it has only been within the last decade that scholars began to truly explore the child’s role in family migration (Orellana et al., 2001;

Parreñas, 2005a; Whitehead & Hashim, 2005; Gardner, 2009; de Lima, Punch & Whitehead, 2012; Gardner, 2012).

### **A critique of the dominant notions and the emergence of a transnational perspective**

Since the 1990s, notable transnational migration approaches have emerged as a way of capturing family formations in relation to links that exist between migrants and non-migrants, and the economic, political, and cultural conditions influencing their practices and symbolic meanings in what can be termed as the *transnational turn* (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Faist, 2000; Foner, 2000; Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Levitt, 2001a, 2001b; Morawska, 2003; Vertovec, 2004b; Faist, Fauser, & Reisenauer, 2013). For instance, Portes et al. (1999) and Vertovec (1999) applied transnationalism in exploring what it means to live in an interconnected and topographically complex world without depending exclusively on structural and macroeconomic assumptions.

#### *Transnational turn for and with children in migration studies?*

With few exceptions (for instance Orellana et al. 2001; Parreñas 2008; Naomi Tyrrell 2011; de Lima et al. 2012; Gardner & Mand 2012a; Dona & Veale 2014; Punch 2014) the transnational turn has not highlighted young people in academic research and policy discourse. Where visible, emphasis is rather given to the impacts of transnational life on their future. Children's perspectives, actions and their everyday life experiences have often been either overlooked or constructed as innocent victims of globalisation and passive economic dependents in the migration process (Punch 2007a; Cooke 2008; White et al. 2011).

Moreover, studies since the 2007-8 GFC concentrated on adult migrant workers. This may be linked to the adult-centric nature of traditional migration theories discussed earlier, or dominant labour migration discourses that assume migration is an adult worker's endeavour. This same line of argument also extends to the notion that children are economic dependents and passive victims of migration (Crivello, 2015), thereby underestimating their subjective economic agency. Even more relevant will be the futuristic notion that children are *becoming human* (Holloway & Valentine 2000:5; Qvortrup 1994:2). This emphasises the need to prepare children to be better citizens rather than focusing on their present experiences, identities, and social formation (White et al., 2011).

Furthermore, research and policy priorities often focus on enhancing an adult's freedom of movement for trade and employment across North-South migration corridors, with relatively little attention on family formation and children. Africa-North America transnational migration has been under-researched and there is virtually nothing on South-South transnational migration (with the exception of the transnational adoption literature) and its impacts on children and their social relationships. Moreover, studies focusing on children and childhood in Ghana or Ghanaian transnational families are even scarcer as will be noted later on in this review.

### *Mobility optic for transnational migration studies*

The transnational approach, although important, is problematic given the huge emphasis on cross-border movement and international migration. Drawing from the views of Faist (1997), Massey (1998:3 cited in Castles 2010), and Veale & Dona (2014), it can be deduced that definitions of migration posit large-scale, one-way, and long-term human movements, as was seen post the Second World-War, and cannot fully reflect contemporary forms of mobility that are circular, interdependent, progressively complex and involving a series of events across time and space. As posited by Hannam et al. (2006:1 cited in Dona & Veale 2014), 'the concept of mobility is broader than that of migration', it involves 'all forms of mobility, ranging from daily routine movements around the home and neighbourhood, to long-distance movement and virtual mobility, and the ways in which transport, travel, [technology] and communication functions in people's lives.' Movements for work, education, training, employment, marriage, retirement and tourism are ways of recognising the significance of mobility in everyday life and life course trajectories of people from childhood to adulthood.

Veale and Dona's (2014:1-2) work is perhaps significant for emphasising 'child and youth-mobility-in-migration.' Young people's lives are characterised by different forms of spatial mobility: short-distance everyday mobility; individual or group movements; regional; international/long-distance; and embodied real, virtual and imaginative (Coe, 2012). Other scholars similarly investigated child mobilities including return migration (e.g. Orellana et al. 2001), and how being left-behind in an origin country can reinforce children's mobility between multiple households and geographies (Zhang, 2015:394). For young people – and their social relations – mobility is a critical aspect of their life course and their aspiration to 'becoming somebody' (James et al., 1998; Langevang & Gough, 2009; Crivello, 2011). For

instance movement for education is seen as a route out of poverty and towards better ‘future’ opportunities (e.g. higher education and work) and identity constructions (Punch, 2007b). With this in mind, and considering the commodification of childhood and children’s spaces (e.g. after-school clubs and leisure centres), one of my interest in this thesis will be to explore how the economic condition of the transnational family amid austerity and government disinvestment in children’s play and learning spaces (e.g. cuts in playground schemes and the closure of libraries, etc.) affects their local mobility and social participation.

As far as imagined or virtual forms of mobility are concerned, ethnographic accounts reveal how subjects who stay behind perceive their place in mobility, as well as their conditions as ‘left-behinds’. These studies reveal the affective and material conditions of non-migrant children of migrant parents and their transnational networks (Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2012).

Furthermore, imagined mobility, linked lives, ideas and places have implications for the construction of gender relations in transnational households. For instance, while Hirsch's (1999) work highlights gendered relations for married women living in Mexico as influenced by US soap operas, Coe (2012), and Gardner & Mand's (2012:984) work particularly highlights how children in Ghana and British-Bangladeshi children, respectively, associate places and people overseas with work, leisure, and freedom. This, in turn, informs children’s migration intentions and place constructions based on intra- and inter-generational perspectives or experiences. The capacity to imagine life in a place is critical to present and future mobility motivations. In essence, the construction of transnationalism is not limited to physical mobility but also the capacity for imagining connections between people and places.

Another form of mobility which is worth noting from the literature is on ‘cosmopolitanism’ and a ‘flexible lifestyle’ of young people as a means of career advancement and ‘self-realisation’ through the accumulation of social, cultural and educational capital (Kennedy 2010:466; Kalir 2012:324). Kennedy (2010:466) and Kalir (2012), for instance, comment that the intensification of economic globalisation through the neoliberal agenda and inequalities in capital accumulation has shaped human mobility and therefore fostered ‘hypermobility’ – moving to virtually everywhere internally and internationally (Kalir 2012:323) by ‘middling migrants’ (i.e. young migrants with a middle-

class background) and those from wealthy class families. However, maintaining one's class category is uncertain with mobility; from an upper-class status people may end up in middle-class positions in host societies (Kennedy, 2010), as pointed out by Glick, Schiller & Salazar (2013; see also Kennedy, 2010). Hence, the assumption of increased freedom of mobility among different classes of moving subjects should be problematised.

Contrary to mobile subjects is the category of people who are immobile. The mobilities paradigm has been criticised for celebrating an ever-increasing global fluidity of ideas, capital, goods and people (Urry, 2001 cited in Kalir, 2012), rather than representing the concrete consequences that such fluidity carries for different people in different positions and localities (e.g. Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002 cited in Kalir 2012:313). Despite the advancements in bilateral, regional and international agreements for improved economic integration, particularly with international trade, human mobility has often been selective and restrictive (UN Development Programme 2009; Shamir, 2005 cited in Kalir 2012:313). This is not to say that only contemporary migration in relation to globalisation is an activity by the few; even in the colonial era movements were unequal and coercive (slaves, indentured workers, etc.) (Cohen 1995 cited in Castles 2010). Rather, an examination of contemporary mobilities' restrictive nature can draw attention to non-migrant children and parents whose mobility intentions may be delayed or constrained due to gender norms, household structure, availability of material resources, and legal status of parents, amongst other factors (Malmberg, 1997; Veale and Andres, 2014; Veale and Dona, 2014). For instance, studies have shown that while countries attract adult migrant workers, they do not allow them to move with their family members, including children or spouses, in the immediate period. The impacts on social reproduction cannot be ignored (Katz, 2001:713). Within various constraints, a number of strategies could be adopted (Schapendonk, 2010). However, the accomplishment of reproductive needs can be challenging when immigration policies are tightened to reduce net migration flows. This raises the question of how social reproduction is accomplished under restrictive migration policies. For instance, how has a UK reactionary and restrictive migration policy measure since 2008 potentially resulted in the immobility of child migrants?

The conceptual approach of mobility is plausible for stressing the experiences of both mobile and immobile people, and consequently, the manner in which neoliberal and political regimes powerfully shape spatial movements depending on geographic and social



position. However, it has not been sufficiently applied – at least not in the context of West Africa and Ghana in particular. Conradson & Latham (2005) for instance, comments on how so much of the transnational migration research has focused on mobility patterns between North America and developing countries of Central America and the Caribbean to the neglect of other migration corridors. When used, there is a huge focus on adult migrants – especially caregivers – refugees, and businessmen and women (Urry, 2007:10-11, cited in Kalir 2012). Moreover, the state and its role in controlling moving subjects have often been the point of departure for intellectual hypotheses, research, and analysis, to the neglect of everyday grassroots interactions (Castles, 2010: 1566; Kalir, 2012). A related pitfall is the tendency to underestimate ‘powerfields’ or restrictive migration policies that attempt to ‘stem the tide’ of migration (Kalir 2012:314). This happens against the backdrop of representation of moving subjects with water-related metaphors (e.g. flows, waves and streams) to represent such ‘copious flows’ which tends to downplay the complex lived-life experiences of the ‘many losers’ of globalisation as commented by Kalir (2012:314 ). Moreover, Collyer & King's (2015) work equally encourages us to think about the influence of the state on transnationalism and transnational social spaces as well as in the context of mobility and immobility. This requires much reconsideration of transnational families from a conceptual and analytical approach. I will employ the mobility-in-migration approach in order to position the concept of transnational migration – which is often conceptualised as a physical and long-distance movement – in relation to individual, collective, imagined movements and immobile trajectories. This can explicate diverse forms of spatial (e.g. the smaller forms of movements between houses, school or communities) and imagined mobility within the context of the governance of crisis; the dynamics of mobility and immobility including underlying reasons; movement between more than two places; and how material things and practices connect people within multiple sites, including the UK and Ghana, to (re)shape the transnational field.

### **Situating childhood**

Scholars (James & Prout, 1990; James et al., 1998; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; Prout, 2005; Wells, 2009) argue that childhood is a culturally variable social phenomenon. Thus, childhood is constructed based on children’s lived-life experience in a particular society and cultural context. Historical context is also important in understanding how childhood has been constructed over time. Wells (2009:2) notes that children’s lives have

been defined in 'conformity, resistance or reinvention' with an idealised form of childhood. Since Ariès (1962:128) claim that 'in the [European] medieval society the idea of childhood did not exist', many writers have attempted to deconstruct notions about children and childhood and review how childhood is constructed and reconstructed with respect to historical time, space, material social practices, and gender.

Following the inauguration of the New Social Studies of Childhood(NSSC), the discourse of childhood studies and its sub-disciplines has slowly moved away from focusing on children's futures, towards placing emphasis on the child's everyday life experiences (Besten, 2008). Holloway and Valentine (2000:5) expressed this as a situation where children were perceived as 'human becomings', a notion which shaped normative standards that regards the child as incompetent and incapable and needing an adults' help,<sup>4</sup> rather than human beings. In an attempt to describe emerging consensus around childhood, James & Prout (1997:8) noted the following key developments: first, 'childhood is understood as a social construction'; second, 'childhood can never be entirely divorced from other social variables such as class, gender, or ethnicity'; third, 'children's social relationships and cultures are worthy of study in their own right'; fourth, 'children are not just the passive subjects of social structures and processes' but they are competent social actors; fifth, 'ethnography is a particularly useful methodology for the study of childhood'; and sixth, 'childhood is a phenomenon in relation to which the double hermeneutic of the social sciences is acutely present'.

Having noted the construction of a childhood depending on social and cultural context, the literature also takes a particular stance on children's social competence and childhood as a social space. Social constructionists argue that children do not simply internalise society and culture, but rather they actively contribute to cultural production and change (Corsaro, 2005). Similarly, James et al. (1998:6) suggest that children are 'social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances'. Thus, children are not passive to happenings in society; they are likely to contribute to coping or social reproduction strategies through their participation and actions. Their agency in this sense should be

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<sup>4</sup> See also (Qvortrup 1994:2) and (Ridge 2013:412) on how government intervention such as the child poverty strategies during crisis and post-economic crisis era focused on children's future rather than their present childhoods as well as a shift in the discourse from 'child poverty' to 'family poverty' which to some extent undermines children's individual rights and their entitlements as social citizens if considered within wider issues of the family within social policy.

considered critical to the construction of their social lives, relations, and society (James and Prout, 1990; Shanahan, 2007).

The New Social Studies of Childhood has focused on familial, household, and societal issues with little attention to macro-structural issues. As argued Qvortrup (1999), children are embedded in wider society and participate in a number of issues related to macro-structural dimensions of society, yet because of their often assumed subordinate role in relation to adults, they have often been overlooked. Based on this notion, Qvortrup (1999:5) calls for research to ‘deal with macro-societal forces which willy-nilly construct and reconstruct childhood’. Bearing in mind the need to focus on structural issues, economic forces, and the impact on reproductive processes, transnational households can be seen as a way of understanding how childhood is governed and reconstructed in times of crisis and by extension, how we can construct transnational childhoods based on a set of material and social practices.

As far as what is considered a *good childhood*, this ontological issue has not been sufficiently addressed. However, some pointers could be drawn from three scholars who have discussed childhood from a global and macro-structural perspective. While childhood is diverse with respect to social and cultural contexts, universal notions of childhood also exist in relation to children’s needs and expectations. For instance, children have a desire for emotional attachment and affection, physical care, and material support for their growth (Wells, 2009). Expectations and needs to be fulfilled have been the premise of global normative instruments (e.g. the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)) developed and often implemented by international organisations together with their public or private partners as a way of globalising idealised forms of childhood. These have equally influenced national social policies and laws that govern childhood and children’s daily needs with the view of ensuring their successful transition to adulthood (Coe, 2012). For instance by stating ‘that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment’, the UNCRC is implying that the family is critical to raising a child into being a good person (Prout, 2005:11). Moreover, beyond international instruments, Wells (2009) suggests that global media and other arena’s such as the family, school, and work are some of the means of thinking about notions of proper childhoods in relation to children’s everyday lived realities. Dominant notions include the description of the family as a ‘private space’, a ‘free’ and restful place for people (Wells, 2009:71). Along

the same lines, Qvortrup (1999) argues that popular narratives regarding modern childhood advocate for school education and discourages work and child labour. Encouraging children to stay in school is suggestive of how an idealised form of childhood should be in two ways: firstly, childhood should be work-free; secondly, investment in a child's education will make him/her a better citizen while an unschooled child will become a burden for society in the future. Crivello (2015:42) indicates that a good life, and therefore a good childhood, is also constructed around the nature of social relationships including 'parental presence, harmonious relations, inter-generational support, and a sense of belonging with others', in which a transnational child would vary depending on their emplacement. This has consequences on what is considered a good childhood.

Briefly, it can be said that a good childhood in the context of transnational migration could be examined from the realities of life that exist within various arena's (e.g. the family and school) to shed light on how the governing of economic crisis affects idealised notions of childhoods, the organisation of family life, and social reproduction within transnational families.

### **Unpacking children and childhoods in the context of migration**

Recently, interest has intensified in children's movements within and across borders, transnational families and the conditions of children left behind. In particular, the literature has focused on children's perception of, and feelings about, parental migration or family migration (Orellana et al., 2001; Parreñas, 2005b; White et al., 2011; Coe, 2013; Dona & Veale, 2014).

Globalisation has caused the spread of transnational households and has challenged the gender norms of family life. For instance, despite traditionally held views on the gendered and generational division of labour, some women's roles have shifted from nurturer (e.g. 'homemaking' responsibilities such as child-rearing) to being breadwinners (Morokvasic, 1984; Boyle & Halfacree, 1999) as a consequence of being part of a transnational household. However, it has also been noted in the literature that women do not abandon their gender norms completely (Parreñas 2001a; Coe 2011b; Faist et al. 2013). Instead, they are required to fulfil two obligations: earning income and serving as caregivers, in both their home and destination countries.

These gendered norms have implications for social reproduction (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2013). With the changing

nature of employment in late capitalism, women may procure marketised caregiving in order to undertake paid work and this can produce a cascading chain of the displacement of mothers from caring for their own children to caring for other people's children (Wells 2009). In some cases, this may imply a redefinition of social relations and what it means to be a 'good mother' within the household and thus can affect the household as being the locus of production and social reproduction. In transnational households, this consequently means there could be a relocation of childcare to the child's parent's home country in order to fulfil parental duties (Katz 2004: 31-2). These results in parenting at 'a distance' in which contact is maintained with children in home countries, remittances and gifts are sent, and occasional visits are made. However, even when parents fulfil these parental responsibilities under various constraints (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2001a, 2008; Smith, 2006), evidence from the Philippines and Central America suggests that the physical absence of the child's parent/s could result in a cumulative negative experience of loneliness, insecurity, and vulnerability for these children, especially for those who crave family intimacy (Cortes, 2007; Castañeda & Buck, 2011). Additionally, the literature suggests that the emotional and affective challenges of children are linked to the absence of their mothers (Parreñas 2001a; Parreñas 2008; Coe 2011c). This may be due to women's role as naturalised carers at both the individual level and within the wider society (Cox 2013:496). Therefore, it is evident that migration affects social reproduction by altering gender norms and child-rearing capacities, this has implications for whether those within a transnational household are considered 'good parents'. In my research, what it means to be a good parent – mother or father – and by extension, a sibling or partner, will be explored to understand such constructions from a transnational perspective.

However, as aforementioned, it would be erroneous to consider children in transitional households as malleable and submissive subjects. Instead, children's present choices, constraints, and future aspirations may influence parental migration motives (Orellana et al., 2001; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2011b; Tyrrell, 2011). This forms part of the conceptual view around varied forms of children's agency, i.e. the capacity to act or exert power, in the migration process. In Britain, Tyrrell (2011) observed a spectrum of agency expressed by children in migratory decision making. The spectrum varied from parent/s choosing to migrate and then informing the child afterwards, to children who actively participated in the decision-making process. This agency, as noted by Tyrrell (2011), is

further influenced by age – older children can be more active in decision making when compared to young children, due to their developing competency. Other scholars have made a distinction between passive (or thin) agency, meaning when children act on other people's interest or within a limited scope of options, and active (or thick) agency, meaning when children act independently and with wider options available (Punch, 2007c; Tyrrell, 2011). My research is not only interested in how agency is exerted by children, individually or collectively, but also their role as actors in practices associated with responding to crisis. Agency will be explored from a cultural context to shed light on how it is exhibited in and between places (i.e. the UK and Ghana) for children exposed to different forms of culture (Twum-Danso, 2009; 2008; Coe, 2011a), and therefore how agency is culturally defined.

A segment of the literature addresses young people's independent migration. Hashim (2007), Kwankye et al. (2009) and Thorsen (2014) have explored the situation of independent child migrants in Ghana and across borders in Africa. Their findings have challenged the widespread categorisation of independent child migrants as vulnerable, 'out of place' (Crivello 2015:39), and 'the luggage' of family migration (Whitehead & Hashim, 2005; White et al., 2011). Similar evidence by Orellana et al. (2001) identified various forms of mobility, including 'parachute kids', whose migration strategy aims for upward social class mobility for themselves and their families as well as children who are sent to their parent's origin countries to learn cultural values. However, it is unclear how effective the latter is, particularly when cultural contexts may have changed across time. Punch's (2007b; 2014) seminal work with Bolivian children who migrated to Argentina also highlights young people's agency in migration by pursuing aspirations, work, and education, resulting in self-development and autonomy. However, it is observed that return migration by young independent migrants can lead to a rise in tension over values between migrants and non-migrants. In addition, Hashim (2005), Hashim (2006), Thorsen (2005) and Punch (2007a) reveal the significance of inter-generational relationships between (potential) young independent migrants and non-migrants. However, Punch underscored gaps in research related to how intra-generational relations among moving subjects and non-migrants (e.g. boyfriends and girlfriends) are managed and negotiated over time and in response to crisis situations; a dimension which will be explored in my thesis.

A significant theme in the literature is the nexus between migration and remittances. A remittance is a sum of money sent as a gift to family or friends in the migrant's home

country. The impact of remittances, however, remains a contested issue between economists and non-economic scholars, given its mixed outcomes for recipient households. At the micro-level, remittances impacted positively on educational attainment and healthcare in the Philippines (McKenzie & Rapoport, 2006; Yang, 2008; Lakshman, Perera, & Sangasumana, 2014). Although it is also reported that in some cases there were in fact incidences of absenteeism from school and increased housework for children left behind (McKenzie and Rapoport, 2006). Stark & Robert (1988) argue that remittances can promote household asset accumulation with little productive investment (Faist et al., 2013). At the macro-level, it is argued that remittances contribute to poverty reduction (Adams & Cuecuecha, 2010). Nevertheless, loss of economic competitiveness for remittance-dependent countries (e.g. Haiti, Jordan, Jamaica, Cape Verde and El Salvador and see also dependency culture as noted by Chami et al. (2003) has been discovered. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994), Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997), Parreñas (2001a, 2005a) and Toth (2007), showed that remittance effects might vary depending on who migrated, who stayed behind, and the significance of the extended families. For instance, Toth (2007) observed that children experienced fewer negative effects with respect to education and emotional concerns when fathers migrated and mothers stayed behind to take care of them. In the absence of both parents, the support of the extended family reduced these emotional impacts. Parrenas (2008; 2005) also observed gendered differences in communication with children by the migrant parent. For instance, in the Philippines, fathers abroad, as compared to mothers, rarely communicated with their children at home. The frequency and maintenance of interactions (e.g. through phone calls, postage and travel) may be mediated by economic and social class factors such as employment sector, income levels and material assets of migrants and non-migrants (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002:3). Consequently, there appears to be an unexplored area of the literature in relation to the effect of changing economic conditions on communication by the transnational family, either through remittance, verbal, or other communication. This is an issue which I will be exploring in my research.

Migrants' ideas, values and beliefs could be transferred across space in what Levitt (2001a:59-63) termed as social remittances (Goldring, 2004; Faist et al. 2013; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2013). With few exceptions (such as Punch, 2007a; Punch, 2007b; Gardner, 2009; Veale & Dona, 2014), the current state of the literature on social remittances seems to predominantly focus on adults. Less attention has been paid to children's role in transfer or

receipt – including what forms of acceptance or resistance of social remittances may exist across and in the various geographic spaces that children occupy. This may be due to how traditional research on remittances have been conceptualised around adultist and diasporic contributions for national development in origin countries. This raises questions regarding how children transfer social remittances and how they are negotiated at different places (e.g. home, school, etc.); I will consider this notion in my research inquiry. Learning from the transnational child's experience as either a British-born person living in Ghana, or vice versa, can help us in understanding their various social remittances, including their translation competence and ability to transfer a culture and its meanings from one place to the other and to what extent 'culture' is regarded as being attached to a place of origin or re-forged into a hybrid or transnational culture

Moreover, the theorisation of remittances seems to have been mainly focused on how it flows from destination to origin countries. However, given that children may fluidly circulate between origin and destination countries under contemporary mobility, it is important to look for possible acts which reverse social remittance – that is, what flows from origin to destination countries and children's role in this. This issue will be further discussed in this literature review with respect to temporality.

### **Temporality: Transnationality, the Life Course, History and Generation**

Many scholars employ the 'life course' approach to migration in order to emphasise the relational aspects – since life involves social relationships with others – but also notably to examine issues such as: parent-child relationships and their social and economic status during key events (Elder, 1994; 1998a); youth-to-adult transitions in uncertain periods (Locke and Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011; Punch, 2014); the impact of child migration on the child's family (Vidal, 2011); and children's embodied life journeys in relation to place (Orellana et al., 2001; Gardner, 2009; Gardner & Mand, 2012b). The life course approach has advanced over time, and pioneers like Elder have theorised and defined the life course theory as a 'pattern of socially defined, age-graded events and roles which is subject to historical change in culture and social structure' (1998:302). In research, this is significant considering the fact that in most societies, discursive elements of families and government policies are constructed in relation to child-to-adult transitions where an individual is expected to experience certain life events such as education, work, and marriage, among others, with respect to time.



Focusing on individual life course principles – that is time, place, linked-lives, and human agency – some factors raise important issues regarding an individual’s life trajectories at different stages (Elder, 1994). Dornan & Woodhead (2015:11) offer a useful definition of trajectories by distinguishing it from transitions. Trajectories, in their view, are the ‘general paths by which children accumulate capacities as they grow; they are punctuated by critical transitions or junctures such as school enrolment or family illness, which may prove to be turning points within the long-term process of children’s development’.

Punch (2007a, 2007b) and Gardner's (2009), seminal work has subsequently influenced thinking on independent child migration, and how migration shapes identities and facilitates transitions from childhood, youth and adulthood. But while school-to-work life transitions may be an outcome of mobility, a lot appears to be taken for granted amongst migrants – and in research – that establishes a positive relationship between physical and social mobility in life trajectories (see for instance UN Development Programme, 2009). There appears to be a biased focus on how mobility improves economic outcomes (e.g. improved earnings) to the neglect of social aspects. This is epitomised by phrases such as ‘migration for development’, and programmes implemented by international organisations that posit mobility from one place to another as offering opportunities such as employment. Consequently, this thesis shall explore the relationship between migration and social mobility to explain young people’s perceptions of how movements impact or contribute to their social emplacements and life transitions (e.g. work, education, marriage and relationships), particularly when economic opportunities have become insecure. This leads to the question of how mobilities in the context of changing economic conditions affect the pursuit of economic and social aspirations for migrants. For those who fail to meet their migration expectations for various reasons, what forms of identity constructions exist around their experience?<sup>5</sup> At the same time following Findlay & Li (1997:37), attention will be given to migrants’ formerly held values and interpretations of life abroad and ‘their current perceptions of the meaning of their experiences’ as these are likely to shed light on their future actions and aspirations.

There are also intersectionalities to consider when theorising young migrants’ lives and identities. Gender and age also affect a young person’s possibilities and perspectives

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance hero/victim identity as noted in *Servants of Globalisation* (Parreñas, 2001b).

about transnational migration. Coe (2012) and Punch's (2014) work emphasises a gendered analysis of intra- and inter-generational relationships. However, while young people's job acquisition, improved earnings, and intimate relationships form important aspects of migration decisions (Punch, 2014), Coe's research underscores how education mediates migration decisions at a particular life stage. Coe's research findings with Ghanaian children suggest that children believed they needed to get an education in their home country *before* embarking on international migration, as they held the perception that overseas was a place for work. Additionally, childhood is a stage in life when children are first exposed to various gendered notions that will be constructed differently in specific socio-cultural fields. This is true for children in transnational families involved in Gardner's (2009) research. Despite the existing literature, imagined/virtual mobility, and intra- and inter-generational relationships have not been sufficiently utilised and discussed in migration research to understand how age and gender norms are affected by transnational migration. In my research, I will equally be interested in whether economic crisis as experienced in the household reinforces age and gendered norms/practices and if that, therefore, promotes gender inequalities, or if they remain unchanged (Elson 2010). Specifically, if they change or are maintained to what extent do they contest hegemonic masculinities (Elson, 2010; Cox 2013a)?

Transnationality across the life course with respect to generations has also been an area of focus in the literature. Assimilation theorists suggest that transnational ties get weaker when immigrants assimilate through ethnic identification with their new society, and as their traditional, family and kinship ties with their homeland dissolve (Schiller and Levitt, 2004). Further, transnationality may be unequal across generations. However, this notion is problematic, as it tends to overlook the effect of the many periodic, selective transnational activities that an individual engages in at different life stages (Schiller & Levitt 2004:20-1). For instance, Waters & Levitt (2002) argue that transnationality ebbs away among school-aged young people and significantly diminishes in early adulthood due to work and young family commitments. However, it rises again at a later stage in life. Additionally, constructing notions of transnationality in relation to the degree of parental assimilation or (family) settlement in the destination country tends to underestimate young people's subjective experiences, their agency and how they forge paths that may be independent of parental oversight (Orellana et al. 2001). Consequently, I will explore the following in my thesis: How have relationships between migrants – first and second generations – and non-

migrants developed, altered, declined or strengthened in their lifetime? What particular opportunities and restrictions lead to periodical involvement in transnational practices? How do young people articulate and negotiate transnational practices at different life stages and under different economic circumstances? And, lastly, the degree to which transnationality within the transnational space ebbs or flows.

Exploring transnationality from a life course perspective seems plausible considering that transnational practices vary in degrees of intensity over one's life experience and perhaps in relation to an agent's capacity within the social space. Therefore, the life course analytical framework with an emphasis on its key principles, such as historical time and place, timing, linked lives and human agency, will be applied in this research (Elder 1998). These key principles will lend explanation for issues such as how mobility between places in periods of crisis affects children's lives given that place is an important determinant in constructing and constraining an individual, practices, and aspirations (Crivello 2015:44). Further questions to be explored include: what are the key life transition events in a child's life at a particular time and how have they potentially been influenced by economic crisis and austerity (for instance deferred graduation)? How do children exercise agency under such constraints? Finally, given that social networks often mediate the migrant's response to deteriorating economic conditions, linked-lives (and intersecting markers such as age and gender) could reveal children's networks that are created or used across space and time (Crivello, 2015) in periods of crisis.

Nevertheless, the life course framework has been criticised by scholars like Mayer (2005 cited in Vidal 2010:176) for being 'unclear about the precise mechanisms and specific forms of institutional support [or factors] that generate distinct outcomes in people's lives'. Of course, key institutional factors such as school quality, household culture and broader social expectations as well as place-based inequalities (Dornan & Woodhead 2015:11) do have an impact on children's life outcomes. However, my thinking merges with Vidal's in the sense that the life course approach in itself has the merit of revealing how certain life results have been influenced by past events, even if it does not have a focus on institutional aspects.

Elder (1998:5-6) has attempted to identify key issues to consider in reducing some of the potential limitations of the life course approach. This involves the need for systematic consideration of age-graded expectations to explain whether specific life events 'are early,

on time, or late', as well as the cultural content of child socialisation. In essence, this will help in explaining the research questions, linked to the concept of childhood and therefore good childhood from a socially-constructed perspective (Wells 2009). Additionally, Locke & Lloyd-Sherlock (2011:1148) underscore the significance of linked-lives in addressing some of the challenges related to the analysis and interpretation of life events. Linked-lives suggest an inter-dependent way of living where a person's circumstance is likely to have an impact on others whom they relate with. Locke and Lloyd-Sherlock (ibid) note the need to adopt a 'respondent-centric approach' that involves interviewing or seeking the opinions of significant others who are involved in children's formative experiences in order to gain a clearer understanding of the situation.

### **2007/8 Global Financial and Economic Crisis**

The 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis was the worst economic shock since the Great Depression and the 1930 era of migration (Awad, 2009; Fix et al., 2009). Various narratives attribute the cause of the crisis to mortgage lending to borrowers with poor credit histories and inability to repay loans (Fix et al., 2009; Wiggins, Piontek, & Metrick, 2014), in addition to capital investment and production relocation to Asia resulting in wage declines in the Global North (Elson, 2012a). Beginning as a financial crisis, this event resulted in a global economic recession with rippling effects on the Global South.

#### *Responses and outcomes: austerity, the 'big society' and the crisis of social reproduction*

Most Western governments since 2008 responded to the crisis through bailouts of financial institutions. However, unlike the United States, most European governments moved from fiscal stimulus and towards austerity (Richardson, 2010; Oxfam, 2013) resulting in mixed outcomes. For example, since 2010 corporate investment, including from non-bank options, has increased in the US compared to the UK (Brown, 2010; Posen, 2012), leading to growth in GDP. Moreover while the US experienced an increase in real incomes, employment and consumption, less income uncertainty, and low cost of energy (Posen, 2012; Oxfam, 2013), the UK experienced a higher inflation, increased energy cost and fiscal austerity measures – mainly in the form of spending cuts and small increments in tax – which has potential consequences on real incomes and cost of living (Posen, 2012; Oxfam, 2013).

Since the 2007-8 GFC, UK fiscal austerity measures – mainly in the form of spending cuts and small tax increments – have had consequences on the average household's cost of living in Britain (Hall, 2016). Within the past ten years, examples of these government policies have included: a freeze on child benefits; constraining the working-age benefits to 1% per year; reducing housing benefit payments for families who have spare rooms; cutbacks in the local housing allowance and housing benefits; setting of a welfare cap; removal of tax credits meant to compensate low-wage earning workers, (HM Treasury, 2010; Richardson, 2010; Ridge, 2013), and increments in Value Added Tax from 17.5% to 20% (Ridge, 2013). These expenditure and welfare cuts have not been proportional to pay raise or average wage growth (Clegg, 2018), despite the fact that the cost of living in the UK continues to increase (Posen, 2012; Dowling & Harvie, 2014). In fact, recent data from the Office of National Statistics suggests that despite the fall in inflation to 2.7% in the post-Brexit era, UK workers endured inflationary effects of the 2008 GFC and the 2016 Brexit vote with inflation rates as high as 2.8% in September 2008 and as low as 0.2% in October 2015 (Clegg, 2018). Consequently, it is evident to see the ways in which the United Kingdom's response to the GFC can place an economic strain on households and particularly transnational households.

It is important to bear in mind that unlike other past financial crises (e.g. the Latin American crisis of the early 1980s and the Asian crisis of 1997), the 2007/8 GFC had far-reaching impacts on developing countries (Elson, 1998; 2010; 2012a). Elson notes that the GFC's impact on nations within the Global South was evident through factors such as a shortfall in export demand, which resulted in a fall in output, employment, earnings, and enjoyment of labour rights. Similarly, the social reproductive aspects were characterised by low consumption and nutrition as well as poor school attendance. Thus, it is evident that the GFC negatively affected countries within the Global South. Furthermore, perspectives vary on the role of remittance flows from migrants in periods of crisis. One side of the literature suggests that remittance flows increase (Kapur 2004; Yang 2008), while in some cases a reduction was experienced depending on migrant household conditions (Awad, 2009; Beets & Willekens, 2009; Fix et al., 2009; Koehler, 2010; Elson, 2010; Ghosh, 2011). As a result of the GFC, emigration trends became more gendered and selective in some areas. Countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia experienced high female out-migration while male migration dropped due to increased demand for domestic service which remains

coded as women's work (Arguello 2010; Green et al. 2010). Arguello (2010) presents anecdotal evidence on how the effect of a crisis in the Global North can impact on the livelihood of people in Peru, resulting in further reinforced gendered and generational norms: women's participation in informal sector jobs increased if they were household heads whilst older boys and girls were encouraged to migrate for jobs and younger girls were tasked with the responsibility of caregiving in the absence of parents. While some studies (Fix et al., 2009) generally discounted notions of migrants return, instances of Filipino migrant workers return to the Philippines were reported during the time of the GFC (Elson, 2010). However, this return should be seen not only from a one-off crisis point of view but rather with reference to neoliberal globalisation regimes and the 'multiple crises' – from neoliberal policies like Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) to dramatic increase in food and oil prices in 2007 - affecting residents of the Global South (Spitzer & Piper, 2014:1009).

On the other hand, response to the inter-generational reproductive sphere (mainly through care, socialisation and education) included an increase in social protection transfers, cuts in social investment, and an increased participation in organised unpaid voluntary work (see Elson, 2010:207 on how financialisation of everyday life and targeting of women for childcare reinforces gender inequalities). Asian Development Bank (n.d.), UNDP (2009), Espey et al. (2010) and Mendoza (2010) all reported instances in which migrant parents undertook extra jobs and increased working hours for additional income, may have relocated the child from a private to a public school, and urged their children to work in part-time jobs. One critical concern has also been the gendered and generational household response to crisis which threatens the equal access to education based on gender and age, yet at the same time challenges gendered norms of a male breadwinner and female nurturer (the latter often having consequences for the ability of men and boys to re-imagine a successful or respected masculinity).

Family reunification is perhaps the most useful entry point for understanding how policies in the context of family migration have changed since the economic crisis. In 2012, the UK Government passed a new family reunification law with a corresponding increment (minimum of £18,600 per annum) in financial proof to be demonstrated by British/settled people wishing to sponsor the immigration of a non-European. Until the economic recession, migration had risen steadily. However, reflecting on the immobility discourse

(Veale and Dona, 2014), it is presumed that these changes in immigration policy have had consequences for family reunification processes and the rise in migration numbers. Thus, I will explore how such changes have impacted reunification plans and processes, in addition to analysing what forms of contradiction arise among government policies and notions of an idealised childhood.

Most of development policy-related literature (see for instance Asian Development Bank n.d.; UNDP 2009; Mendoza 2010) argue that contemporary labour is characterised by insecure employment opportunities (for both native-born and immigrants), and thus migrants have become more vulnerable to retrenchment and scapegoating as job takers (Dinerstein et al. 2014; Spitzer & Piper 2014). Children, especially in countries in the Global South that depend on remittances, have been classified as vulnerable to crisis in-part because of this reason. Further implications for migrants and social reproduction include poor school attendance, deferred education and low consumption of nutritious food as noted earlier (Espey, Harper and Jones, 2010; Mendoza, 2010).

*Children and reconstruction of transnational childhoods and global householding: the missing perspective in social reproduction*

The concepts of global household and transnational families are well-established in the literature and have been applied by scholars in theorising family and household strategies and practices.<sup>6</sup> Evidently, the potential to maintain household interactions or practices – for instance through remittances – is key to the maintenance of transnational households.

Moving subjects embedded in social networks as parents, friends and children of a family are also situated within the political economy. My critique of existing migration literature and the impact of the governance of the crisis on social reproduction on transnational families dovetails with Douglass' (2014:315) argument. In the face of major shifts in economic, political and social relationships among migrants and non-migrants, the 'macro-societal' factors and their effects on global householding remains largely under-researched. Family and household structures are changing; marriage rates and childbearing among people are reducing and divorce rates are increasing in both middle- and high-income

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<sup>6</sup> Goody (1972) and other scholars warned against treating household and family as the same. They have therefore argued for analytical categorisation and families. Household in my research will include co-housing arrangements with intra- and inter-generational members. Family connotes kinship.

countries (Douglass, 2014). What does this mean for inter- and intra-generational social reproduction, social network formation and household resilience, and therefore the construction of global householding? With increasing costs of living and shrinking social welfare, do we then see the (re)production of new forms of households (e.g. friends living together, children staying longer with parents, group living, etc.) (Douglass, 2014:316)? Additionally, the forms of networks and social relationships that are created through the mobilities underscore the fact that it is not enough to examine the impact of economic crisis on kin relations only, but in addition, people who become part of the global household through various social relationships such as marriage or cohabitation and the network of friendship. As suggested by Douglass (2014), it is important to trace both intra- and inter-generational relationships and interactions in order to understand the global household's scale and effects.

Research on social reproduction is multidisciplinary. Major perspectives have focused on the gendered nature of everyday work of reproduction (Haylett, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2004; Elson, 2012b); education, and the effect of neoliberal reforms (Katz, 2004; Waters, 2012) across various scales of topography (Katz, 2001). Some notable work on transnational migration concentrated on women's involvement in paid work, the effect on reproductive roles (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Parreñas, 2001a; 2005a), and how their actions reproduce or contest a gendered norm, particularly where patriarchy is predominant. Drawing from the literature, social reproduction can be defined as an intertwined processes by which a socio-economic system reproduces itself and how human beings who live in the political economy or society reproduce themselves -as individuals, communities and generations – alongside transmission of social and cultural values as well as the construction of individual and collective identities (Picchio, 1992; Elson, 1998; Katz, 2001; Katz, 2004; Douglass, 2013; Dowling & Harvie, 2014). Common aspects of social reproduction include food provision, safety and shelter, child and elderly care, healthcare, emotional or affective labour, laundry and cleaning, and general household maintenance. In particular, Katz notes that social reproduction entails a political-economy of 'the reproduction of work knowledge and skills, the practices that maintain and reinforce class and other categories of difference and ... [sets] of cultural forms and practices that work to reinforce and naturalise the dominant social relations of production and reproduction' (2001:712).



Bearing in mind the contribution of these scholars, it seems that with few exceptions (such as Katz, 2001; Parreñas 2005b; Ansell 2008) social reproduction theory has yet to be further explored in relation to understanding children and other young people's agency, transnationalisation of political-economic change as well as the effect of globalisation of capitalist production on their everyday life work. Here, it is worth mentioning that when children have featured in existing research analysis, dominant terms such as 'mothering from a distance' (Parreñas, 2001a), 'transnational mothering' (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997) and 'global care chains' (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003) have often unintentionally made children and their role in social reproduction less visible. Similarly, the use of the concept could be deduced from the literature suggest that transnational social reproduction with respect to the Africa-Europe migration corridor and therefore the role of transnational children has been under-researched. Another relevant point is the fact that research on the economic crisis focused mainly on adult migrants and the implications of the crisis on their reproductive labour (see for instance Arguello 2010). The temporality of childhood and the governance of social reproduction through austerity measures that target reproductive places (e.g. the family, school, etc.) is critical to understanding and theorising childhoods and how they are being produced across time and space. Katz's notion of countertopographies offers a political-economic logic into understanding the geographies of childhood and social reproduction. It, therefore, will be employed within a global household setting to understand the consequences of economic crisis and globalised capitalist production on childhood at various scales (2001).

#### *Coping strategies in times of economic restructuring*

Vulnerability has been a dominant narrative of the 2007-8 GFC. However, other scholars writing on other periods that were not classified as part of the Global Financial Crisis have also underscored possibilities of household resilience and coping strategies to undermine structural constraints (Katz, 2004; Ensor & Gozdzia, 2010). In transnational migration studies, Punch (2014) is particularly notable for revealing how Bolivian families, especially young people who had migrated from Bolivia to Argentina, coped during Argentina's 2002 economic crisis through further mobility for work. Unlike Elder's 1934 research, Elder (1998), Katz (2005), Cumbers et al. (2010) and Punch (2014) explored resilience beyond individualistic assumptions (Kennedy, 2010:467) by considering the social relations, networks and community agency that enable a person to cope in periods of

economic restructuring. In doing so, these scholars perhaps avoided the tendency of simply classifying people as passive and vulnerable victims of globalisation and economic restructuring and acknowledge their conscious agency. Similarly, in *Growing Up Global*, Katz underscored mutually-reinforcing social practices that affect how households may respond to restructuring while sustaining reproductive needs (e.g. migration, community self-help, etc.). In this thesis, I contribute to the discourse on how migrants and their networks and organisations are (re)produced through practice (Espey et al., 2010; Bailey, 2013). In particular, through exploring children's agency, their material/social practices and survival strategies I identify how children's agency plays out in the context of economic crisis.

## **Conclusion**

Migration within the context of economic crisis needs to be revisited to offer a critical assessment of daily lives within which social relations may be enacted, maintained and altered in relation to the effects of political economy. The few available studies on the economic crisis and the condition of transnational families focus mainly on adult emigration, often with findings of children from an adult's perspective, despite the fact that transnationality is an experience or attitude that varies across age, gender, class and generation. At the same time, despite growing research interest on Ghanaian emigration, children's participation in transnational migration or living in a global household have attracted comparatively less attention in relation to studies regarding Asian and Caribbean transnational migration.

Austerity and other government structural economic reforms are seen as a way in which crisis is being governed towards recovery. At the same time in the critical practice of everyday life, transnational families have to maintain their existence to ensure that the conditions of production are met even in economic change periods. However, it is unclear from the literature how transnational lives have been affected with respect to the 2007-8 Global Financial Crisis and to what extent children and childhood conditions are maintained or altered through social reproduction process, as well as the social and cultural factors that shape the reproductive experiences of transnational households.

Generally, the now-classic debate about childhood has underscored the fact that the concept of childhood is socially constructed and, in most cases,, there has been an emphasis on children's agential competence. It is therefore improper that children and childhoods

remain invisible in terms of their lived experiences with their significant others in periods of crisis. Thus, my main aim with this research will be to problematise economic crisis and structural changes (e.g. welfare reform) as governing practices that are meant to facilitate economic recovery. By so doing I will employ the concept of global households and social reproduction to explain how and to what end reproductive work is undertaken within transnational families and its implications for (re)production and transnational childhoods (re)construction. Similarly, exploring this issue from children's perspective and through a life course approach will shed light on the time-spaces of Ghanaian-British transnational social field and the ways in which the past, present and future affect their practices given that it's over a decade now since the Global Financial Crisis.

## Chapter 3

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### **Researching children in transnational households: fieldwork, research methods and ethics**

‘Doing research is a messy affair, as dependent on negotiation, adjustments, personal choices and serendipity as on careful and meticulous preparation’

(James et al. 1998:169)

This dissertation focuses on the impact of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (GFC) on the daily work of social reproduction among Ghanaian transnational families. It is the outcome of fieldwork undertaken in three locations: Ghana, the United Kingdom (UK), and the United States of America (USA). Specifically, the study investigates three main questions: firstly, if economic crisis reduces family resources, then what are the impacts of this on the lives of children and young people’s life course? Secondly, how did the GFC and economic crisis more broadly influence the daily work of reproduction, transnational practice, and the maintenance of social relations within the transnational social field, and how does this in turn (re)shape the social field? Thirdly, how does the transnational family sustain its reproductive needs through various socially embedded material practices in times of economic crisis?

These research questions are concerned with understanding and interpreting people’s everyday life experiences whilst revealing socio-cultural norms and their meanings in relation to life events. Qualitative research methods and subjective narrative accounts are valuable in understanding children and young people’s everyday lives in different places because narrative accounts prioritise the actor’s voice in understanding reality (Corsaro, 2005; Christensen and James, 2008; Abebe, 2009; Wells, 2011; Pimlott-Wilson, 2012; Punch, 2012). Consequently, a qualitative approach to data gathering was determined to be most appropriate for this study.

In order to address the research questions, multiple participatory methods were employed which combined semi-structured daily life history in-depth interviews and participant and non-participant observations, with task-based activities including time-use diaries, visual work in scrapbooks, and group discussions. Simultaneous matched sample method (SMS) was utilised to connect people across locations. In total, 95 participants were

recruited using snowball sampling with a majority of participants located in the UK. Research participant demographics were as follows: 42 male and 53 females; 12 children (5-9 years); 21 adolescents (10-19 years); 13 youth (20-24 years); 9 young adults (25-35 years), and 40 adults (36 years and above). Twenty-four young people (aged between 5-24 years) lived in London with one or more parent. Twenty-three migrant parents were also interviewed in London. Interviewees in Ghana included children of migrants, returnee child-migrants and parents, and non-kin children living in transnational households located within towns in the Ashanti Region. In Ghana, 18 young people were referred as potential interviewees by their relatives in London. Additionally, 22 young people and adults (20 years and above) were interviewed in Ghana who had caring responsibility for child interviewees. Most caregivers in this instance were women. As of January 2018, the research produced 310 pages of field notes and 490 hours of interview transcripts equalling 450 typed pages.

This Chapter is structured as follows: First, it establishes the rationale for choosing ethnographic principles and why a multi-sited approach was chosen for fieldwork. Second, it describes the research setting in relation to social, cultural and economic characteristics. Third, it explains how research subjects were recruited. Fourth, data generation techniques and their appropriateness, as well as how data was recorded, secured and analysed are discussed. Finally, the ethical implications, including personal or emotional researcher-researched encounters experienced in the research process, and how they were managed reflexively is discussed.

The research design was alert to the fact that full participation in working with children is difficult to achieve, and thus unintentionally risks becoming research *on* children rather than research *with* children, as pointed out by James et al. (1998). Consequently, researchers need to be conscious of taking for granted positionality and more importantly, *places where children are* and equating them to *children's places*. I, therefore, emphasised the need for reflexivity, reciprocity, and rapport building in addition to child-friendly methods as a way of addressing the power imbalances and mistrust that are likely to occur when researching children and migrants at various sites either across borders or within the nation-state.

## **Rationale for choosing ethnography**

The New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) has underscored the efficacy of ethnography for exploring and understanding young people's perspectives on issues affecting their daily lives (James & Prout, 1997; Corsaro, 2005; Emond, 2005; Moran-Ellis, 2010; Coe, 2012). James & Prout (1997:5) suggest that 'ethnography allows children a more direct voice in the production of sociological data than is usually possible through experimental or survey styles of research'. Through ethnography, researchers undertake activities including, but not limited to, asking research informants questions, taking field notes, participating in ceremonies, observing people, visiting families, or staying with them to assist with home chores (Spradley, 1979:3). Ethnography, therefore, has the potential to offer a strategy for exploring context, recording, and interpretation of migrants' everyday lives within social, cultural and economic realities on their own terms. Thus, an ethnographic approach was chosen for this research as the method allows participants a direct voice in knowledge production. This is important when working with people of low status, including young people, whose experiences or perspectives are most often marginalised or left out (as noted in the literature review) (Moran-Ellis, 2010:4).

Since James and Prout's seminal work, a small number transnational migration studies focusing on young people and their families, have underscored the importance of ethnography in migration-related research (e.g. Hashim, 2007; Gardner, 2009; Coe, 2012; Punch, 2012; Dona and Veale, 2014). These studies utilised ethnography to reveal how young migrants constantly negotiate their actions to create meaning from the world around them.

While these scholars established the relevance of ethnography in transnational childhoods, it is necessary to point out that this research method is particularly appropriate for the current research because, as a Ghanaian myself, I am privileged with the knowledge that Ghanaian's rarely discuss personal social and economic circumstances with strangers or acquaintances. In effect, certain questions may be considered 'intrusive' (Langevang 2007:274). Furthermore, as a Ghanaian citizen and a migrant, it made sense to draw on my cultural competence. This was beneficial in accessing information, establishing contacts, and addressing research dilemmas reflexively during fieldwork.

An extensive period of fieldwork and careful reflexive practise was useful in building trusted relationships which allowed for honest and open expression of the

complexities that surrounded participants' lives (Emond, 2005; Langevang, 2007). Prolonged and regular contact with research participants was critical to gaining access and understanding the inner social and economic lives of both children and their social networks. For example, in sharing extensive space and time, some respondents, particularly women and children,<sup>7</sup> recalled (sometimes with emotional distress), events such as income loss, unemployment, family separations, and an inability to pursue their life aspirations for various reasons (Langevang, 2007). Extensive contact allowed me to observe and participate in respondents' daily life activities at various geographic places (e.g. home, at play, church, etc.), thereby allowing me to understand and analyse the findings with respect to social and spatial context (Mullally, 2015).

Ethnographic research findings do not aim for probabilistic generalisations (Snowden and Martin, 2011). Thus, the research findings and conclusions in this thesis do not intend to generalise assertions about transnational households, childhoods and young people's situation during periods of political-economic changes. However, this research with nearly 100 people including children, other young people and adults significantly contributes to understanding the important role played by young people as social agents in transnational and globalised social fields, an area which has been understudied as noted earlier on. Moreover, the analysis has wider implications for theoretical debates focusing on transnational migration complexities, childhood diversity as well as social and public policy related to household and structural inequalities that result from intensely exploitative capitalist production relations and neoliberal globalisation.

### **Multi-sited fieldwork: choice of research settings and getting started**

#### *Justification for choosing the Ghana-UK-USA transnational social field*

This PhD research was started with the goal of contributing to the dominant debates around transnational migration, social reproduction, and childhoods. The decision to focus on Ghanaian transnational households is grounded in historical and political-economic reasons. In particular, the UK-USA-Ghana transnational social field is historically textured through colonial ties. While Ghanaians move and maintain relational ties to both West African countries and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)

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<sup>7</sup> Women and children often expressed this kind of distress in obvious ways. Men and boys did not because crying is culturally associated with girls and women.

countries, evidence suggests that the UK remains the second most preferred destination country for Ghanaians after the USA (Quartey, 2009; The Office for National Statistics, 2014). This, therefore, offers an opportunity for pushing the boundaries of Ghanaian migration studies by focusing on the ‘countertopographies’ that connect Ghana with different countries in order to analyse common everyday life struggles as well as gendered and class-based challenges as noted in the analytical chapters (Katz, 2001:722).

Despite this fact, scholars’ treatment of economic crises and austerity effects have mainly focused on what it means to be a white, British national living in austerity-driven Britain (Pearson & Elson, 2015; Hall, 2016). Thereby failing to represent and further undermining the experiences of other categories of people, including migrants, and their social relations in origin countries. The effect of economic crises (particularly austerity) and predictions of further crises remain topical issues in recent public discourse. In particular, the Government’s recovery measures to the 2007-8 GFC which included relatively low corporate investment, higher inflation, increased cost of energy and fiscal austerity measures – mainly in the form of spending cuts to social services and small increments in tax – has yielded mixed outcomes that had consequences on real incomes and living cost (Brown, 2010; Posen, 2012; Oxfam, 2013; Pearson and Elson, 2015). Despite the continued study of these outcomes, little is known about their impact on migrant populations and young people.

Prior to beginning my PhD research, I knew very little about the effect of the GFC on Ghanaian transnational households and the construction of transnational childhoods. Although I worked with the United Nations in Ghana, and subsequently in New York during the GFC (between 2008 and 2011), and did attend events that underscored rising xenophobia, dwindling migrant remittances and immigrant’s return to origin countries, the decision to focus on Ghanaian transnational households became much more convincing after I realised that scholars who analysed migration in the context of economic crises seemed to have failed to theorise the issue with respect to networks and household decision-making processes. Equally important is that I knew very little about the organisation of the daily lives of Ghanaian transnational families and children in the UK. The decision to focus on London as an initial research site emerged out of conversations with acquaintances and childhood friends living in the UK. Most of these people referred to certain South East London boroughs and locations such as churches and Ghanaian shops as convenient places for data gathering.



*Fieldwork locations: South London, New York and Ashanti Region*

Multi-sited fieldwork was carried out in three south London boroughs Croydon, Lambeth, and Southwark, as well as New York in the United States of America, and the Ashanti Region in Ghana.

Among the London boroughs, Croydon is the most highly populated by Ghanaians with 5,363 Ghanaians living there as of 2014 (The Office for National Statistics, 2014). Most Ghanaians in Croydon live in three districts: New Addington, West Croydon and Thornton Heath. Within these three locations, a number of economic, social, and cultural factors also suggested the borough's relevance for data generation. This included Ghanaian-owned remittance transfer and local food supply shops. Moreover, a sense of belonging is demonstrated through established Ghanaian Home Town Associations (HTAs) and churches.

Similarly, Southwark is the second most densely populated place by London-based Ghanaians. Approximately 4,808 Ghanaians lived in Southwark as of 2014 (The Office for National Statistics, 2014). With an area of 28.85 square kilometres, the borough has a total population of 293,530. The inhabitants are ethnically diverse and youthful (nearly 58 per cent of the population are aged 35 or below) (Southwark Council, 2015). Within the borough, Ghanaians are mainly located in Peckham, Camberwell, and Elephant and Castle. This borough also has similar economic, social, and cultural factors to Croydon with respect to Ghanaian emigrants, including the greatest concentrations of African-Christian churches (Williams, 2014). In fact, most ex-industrial spaces have been converted into religious centres. Further, I personally lived in Southwark between 2016 and 2017, allowing me to recruit informants and share in the daily lives of the respondents with ease, as discussed later in this Chapter.

In addition to Croydon and Southwark, Lambeth has 4,413 Ghanaians and is ranked fourth - after Newham<sup>8</sup> - among places where Ghanaians are highly concentrated in London (Office for National Statistics, 2015). The presence of Ghanaians in Lambeth can be traced to the 1950s, in the post-war economic migration era (Demie and Newman, 2006). Brixton,

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<sup>8</sup> Newham was not selected as a research site because historically, east London is known to be a destination hub for Asian migrant settlement whereas south London has been predominantly linked to African and Caribbean immigrants. It therefore seemed to be more coherent to focus on the south London boroughs.

Streatham, Vauxhall, Clapham, and West Norwood are the main economic hubs, with some Ghanaians owning self-operated Ghanaian and African goods businesses.

Parallel to this, the literature (Quartey, 2009) also suggests most Ghanaian immigrants originate from Ashanti Region and Greater Accra. With few exceptions almost all informants interviewed for this research in London had significant relations in Ashanti Region, including blood children, non-kin child, nephews and nieces as well as brothers and sisters whom they maintained transnational practices with. Consequently, this facilitated the tracing of these relations from London to Kumasi (in Ghana) during the second phase of data collection that took place in Ghana and later in New York, USA, as discussed in the Simultaneous Match Sample below.

Covering an area of 24,389 square kilometres, the Ashanti region is located in Ghana's middle belt and shares boundaries with four other political regions including Brong Ahafo, Eastern region, Central region, and Western region. The Ashanti region has 18 administrative districts including the Kumasi metropolis. Most of the inhabitants are Ashanti by ethnicity despite the inward migration from other regions. With 4,780,280 people - representing 19.4 per cent of the country's total population (24,658,823) - the region is the most populous among the sixteen administrative regions of Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Females (2,464,328) outnumber males (2,316,052), the population is youthful, and approximately 60.6% of the population live in urban areas (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Urban growth is linked to high internal migration to Kumasi, as it is a major trading centre in the region with relatively better schools and healthcare. The region is known for cocoa production, forestry, and gold-mining. The majority of the population work in the informal sector, with only 13.7% working in formal employment (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012).

#### *Why multi-sited research?*

Traditional migration theories suggested that migrants severed ties with people in their origin countries, thus resulting in methodological approaches focusing on origin and destination countries separately. Consequently, most migration research is bi-national, often examining migrant and resources flows across just two countries. While a bi-national study is plausible, it suggests that migrants had relationships between only their origin and destination countries. Beyond just two-way engagement, there are possibilities of multiple engagements across multiple countries that could offer some understanding into how

migrants negotiate their situations amid political-economic opportunities and constraints. Thus, in contrast, I employed a transnational multi-sited approach that examined relationships across three countries and spaces that migrants associated with. Methodologically, this approach reveals the connections between places, as well as the effects of certain political-economic processes on everyday lives and on more than one place (Glick Schiller, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2006; Punch, 2012).

Furthermore, scholars argue that a multi-sited approach helps to avoid three methodological challenges for transnational analysis: 1) methodological nationalism – considering that the nation-states are no longer discrete units; 2) essentialism – with the view that migrant groups have internal heterogeneity; and 3) positionality with respect to being an insider or an outsider (Mazzucato, n.d.; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002; Fitzgerald, 2006; Carling, Erdal, & Ezzati, 2013; Faist et al., 2013). Glick Schiller (2003) and Punch (2012) have equally advocated for a focus not only on how migration affects migrant's abroad but also in their origin countries.

To underscore the advantages of transnational migration data from both migrants and non-migrants embedded in transnational fields, Mazzucato proposes the suitability of the Simultaneous Match Sample (linked sample) ‘...because such studies collect information from both sides, they can best investigate questions about the inner workings of transnational flows and link migrants’ actions with those of people back home... reciprocal relations [that] exist between people living in different countries, and how..... they work’ (n.d.:75). In effect, this multi-sited approach with its relational focus is desirable for understanding (re)negotiated intra- and inter-generational practices, including aspects of gender and family structures, across the transnational social spaces (e.g. home) and how this impacts on children and childhood (Elder, 1998; Punch, 2007a; 2007b; Qvortrup, 2008:76-81).

Being able to connect directly across different countries with the significant relations (e.g. non-migrant, returned children, and caregivers) was useful in understanding how structural changes are likely to restructure production and reproduction differently across spatially and socially interconnected places, thus creating varied outcomes across time, space, class and nation(s) (Katz, 2004; Punch, 2012:1021). For instance, for research participant Mercy, already introduced in Chapter 1, her mother and father live in London. Although also born in London, Mercy's parents sent her to Ghana when she was young due

to their inability to afford childcare costs at a time when they were undocumented and economically insecure with zero-hours contracts as cleaners. After the initial interview in London with Mercy's parents, travelling to Ghana allowed me to meet Mercy (female, 10-19 years, Kumasi), her two siblings, her uncle, and grandmother (carer). Although it may be true that sending Mercy to Ghana would allow her parents to concentrate on work in addition to avoiding childcare costs in the UK or even shifting childcare costs to Ghana, the continued effect of the precarious conditions of the UK-based relations on another geographical space became clear through the collection of data in Ghana. For instance, while her parents did not inform me about their inability to meet her school fees in Ghana, through face-to-face conversation with Mercy, she mentioned with sadness that she was dropped from school on numerous occasions for non-payment of school fees. Her grandmother also confirmed this situation, noting that sometimes she, as a carer, used her personal money for fee payment when remittances from Mercy's parents were delayed. Notably, the effect of her parent's situation in the UK, and the re-organisation of reproduction from Ghana to the UK would not have been clearly revealed by relying solely on the narratives of the parents on one side of the migration point. Additionally, during fieldwork, I discovered diversity in childhood. Depending on the child's location within the social field, their contribution to reproductive work was different. For instance, as the youngest child of three siblings, Mercy often had to undertake certain tasks including buying cooking ingredients, making the fire or fanning it for cooking, managing the sale of second-hand goods sent by their father from London, this was especially when her older 24-year-old sister was cooking. In contrast, most children in London were often playing with toys at home, watching TV, or help with buying items from a corner store. Briefly, it can be said that the majority of children in London spent more time playing and not necessarily having to deal with transnational arrangements, for instance, the sale of goods, whereas, children in Ghana were *expected* to contribute to work or risk punishment. The variation in the treatment of children was due in part to the extension of the home as a place for socialisation as I discuss in Chapter 5. Hence, a multi-sited transnational study allows for comparing and contrasting childhood.

Fundamentally, the theoretical and methodological approaches developed in this thesis analytically connect different places to reveal everyday struggles experienced by British-Ghanaian transnational households and how globalised capitalist production alters material social practices. By doing so, I also offer insights which could help develop

practical solutions to the challenges that confront social and political-economic relations embedded in transnational social fields.

### **Getting started: Ghanaian transnational households and communities**

The most crucial first step in research is determining how to obtain access to the people, groups or community one intends to study (Hammersley, 1997; Nesbitt, 2000; Emond, 2005; Ireland et al., 2009:105-106; O'Reilly, 2009). Gaining access to children can be particularly challenging given that unlike adults, access to young people is often controlled by adults such as parents, teachers or caretakers (Butler & Williamson, 1994; Hood et al.1996; Shaw,1996; Holmes, 1998; Mauthner, 1997 cited in O'Kane, 2008:129-130).

Like most qualitative researchers, I assessed my 'outsider' and 'insider' status (as noted in Table 1 below) before embarking on data collection. In a number of cases, I considered myself as an 'outsider' given that I am an adult seeking young people's perspectives in their own social space. I did acknowledge certain insider attributes; I am a Ghanaian citizen, with permanent resident status in the USA and temporarily resident in the UK. Additionally, I am familiar with Ghana's geographical, political, and economic terrain as well as social and cultural norms underpinning interactions and relationships. Despite these ethnic, age, education, and migration markers which I believe assisted me with insider status, the respondents' initial reactions made me rethink the assumption of 'easy access' to research subjects, based on these insider characteristics.

### *The Impact of Cultural Values on Access*

In commencing data collection in London, I employed snowball sampling. Childhood friends, who later became key informants, were very useful in speaking to potential interviewees about my research. For example, at the second visit to the home of Kwaku (male, 36 + years, security guard, London), the father to one of the child respondents, told me that the research is very intrusive and asked, 'Are you a journalist or an immigration official? Have you been interviewing other people from Ghana?' He also remarked that '[You are] lucky that [they] allowed [you] into their house'. This was given that most Ghanaians are not open to sharing their economic lives with strangers. Research is described as 'intrusive' when it prompts respondents to recall events such as loss of income and life, unemployment, family separations, financial constraints, and inability to meet basic

needs such as food and shelter or how money is used, marital challenges, gendered tensions at home and domestic work distribution, and inability to pursue personal or collective aspirations (Langevang 2007).

Later, it became apparent that certain adult respondents were uncomfortable with the research questions due to the strong cultural values of honour and dignity compounded by their undocumented status. Indeed, honour is a highly regarded ethic in Akan culture and, therefore, to the research subjects. This is often articulated in adages such as '*Disgrace does not befit the child of an Akan*' - '*Aninguase mfata Okannii ba*' and '*It is better to die than to be ashamed and disgraced*' - '*Feree ne aninguasee dee fanyinam owuo.*' Therefore, anything that could bring shame or disgrace – '*aninguase*' rather than glory or honour – '*animuonyam*' is assiduously avoided. Additionally, potential respondents, especially members of Ghanaian communities such as HTA and churches, felt that revealing sensitive aspects of their lives to a stranger meant their life's secrets and challenges will be exposed to others including family members, friends and neighbours, from whom shameful aspects of their lives should be hidden.

Bearing in mind these encounters, I was not surprised by respondent's scepticism given the growing sense of anti-immigrant policies including, for instance, the 'Go Home' van campaign targeting undocumented migrants, as well as on-going Brexit political discourse blaming immigrants and migration for the UK's economic woes. It could be said that these actions by the nation-state have the potential to negatively affect immigrants' responses to research that requires them to reveal their identity and migrant-life experiences. Thus, even with informed consent and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, responses to questions were rather generalised during initial research interview encounters. Nevertheless, this apparent difficulty became an opportunity to understand the reactions of Ghanaians to research targeted at their economic and private lives.

Being reluctant to share personal experiences is not to say that Akans do not expose their life challenges to others. Social and economic challenges may be shared with others, especially if it is hoped that a positive outcome will subsequently emerge. For example, after the introductory meeting with Ivan (male, 36+ years, cleaner, London), his wife, Leticia (36+ years, cleaner, London), who was busy preparing food for her husband, approached me when I was about to leave and remarked: 'so, what can you do to help us? Now the government has introduced £18,600 in financial proof. I need to earn this before I can bring

in my 12-year-old daughter from Ghana. Meanwhile, I work under a zero-hour contract<sup>9</sup> job as a cleaner [looking worried and upset]. This is a low income and insecure job that many immigrants like me do. How do I get this money and how do I get my daughter to join me?’ (Field notebook, 2016). While I made it clear to the couple that I was not a government employee but a research student, I replied that: ‘it is my hope that this research will bring to light how state regulations of immigration, employment, and family policies affected the daily lives of transnational family relations.’ Leticia was not fully involved in the initial meeting due to her work in the kitchen. However, her interest drew my attention to the fact that ‘research respondents do not expect to be patronised – they expect some change to happen with the life experiences that they share with researchers’ (Field notebook, 2016).

Respondents’ culturally tinted reactions, my insider status in some situations, and my social network granted me access and increased the respondent base. A London-based informant, Edward (male, 36 +years, technician) invited me to his house. His wife (Helena, 36+ years, caterer & seamstress, London) and son (Isaac, 10-19 years) together consented to participate in the research. His wife invited me to church and introduced me to four other parents after church, thus opening doors for me to visit and interview more people in their neighbourhood.

### *Social Networks*

During the data-gathering process, I also enjoyed the advantage of a social network of friends and schoolmates, who facilitated access to and encouraged trust in potential research subjects. For instance, a ‘Facebook friend’, invited me to a family ceremony where he introduced me to his friends who are leaders of the Tech Hometown association. In another instance, while remitting money to my parents through a Southwark money exchange, a polite conversation with a Money Transfer Operator, Steven (male, 36 + years, London) revealed we both attended the same university in Ghana. This served as a useful avenue for discussion on life in the UK and later on having an opportunity to interview his wife and two children.

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<sup>9</sup> Zero-hours contracts are casual contracts that offer a piece work on call, for example for cleaning. Usually the employer is not required to provide the worker with any minimum working hours.

*Nurturing relationships with UK-based research participants; gaining access to interviewees in Ghana*

Many of the adult research subjects came to see me as a trusted member of their community, and would call on me to assist with tasks, such as computer software problems, printing employment letters, collecting items for shipment to Ghana, keeping records of funeral expenses and donations, or purchasing computers or cell phones for their children from the United States when I travelled for holidays or research. Sometimes these requests were inconvenient and unexpected. Yet, I accommodated them as a way of appreciating their interest in the research, knowing that relationships among Ghanaians are sustained on the culture of reciprocity as well as material and social solidarity, as discussed in Chapter 5. Moreover, by these requests, the informants and interviewees uncovered their daily lives and transnational practices for my learning, enabling me to ask more relevant questions. The flexibility in accommodating these unexpected requests proved to be very valuable to the research and outweighed any inconvenience.

Consequently, because some respondents asked me to transport goods to their relatives in Ghana, the practical realities of finding Ghana-based child migrants were relatively easy. These Ghana-based relations then became potential interviewees. The interviews with relations in Ghana revealed levels of transnationality and solidarity when ‘managing’ economic crisis, as discussed in Chapter 5. Material resources, including mobile phones, money and food items, that I transmitted to the children and carers in Ghana proved to be useful door-openers, as it confirmed my relationship with their London-based relations. Additionally, prior to visiting relations in Ghana, London-based respondents called and explained the research to their children, and therefore helped to gain access and develop trust. In sum, this particular research found that assisting with remittances can strengthen the relationship and reveal the inner working of transnational households at different points. Nevertheless, for some carers in Ghana, asking questions about children entrusted in their care raised some level of suspicion; particularly they wondered if I was sent to Ghana to assess if they were appropriately using remittances for the child’s upkeep. Caregivers are often the recipient of remittances. Hesitation to be interviewed stemmed from the mistrust that may exist between remittance senders and recipients as to potential remittance misappropriation.



Essentially, I presumed my personal social network within the transnational field was useful in accessing and recruiting research informants. However, as I will discuss later, access and participation in the research was constantly negotiated and renegotiated throughout the research process, especially with child informants (Hammersley, 1997; Nesbitt, 2000; Ireland et al., 2009:106; O'Reilly, 2009).

### **Sample: Simultaneous Matched Sample method (SMS)**

Simultaneous Matched Sample method (SMS) was utilised to link London-based respondents with people they maintained some form of transnational practices with living in Ashanti Region and New York (Mazzucato n.d.) as noted in Figure 1 below.

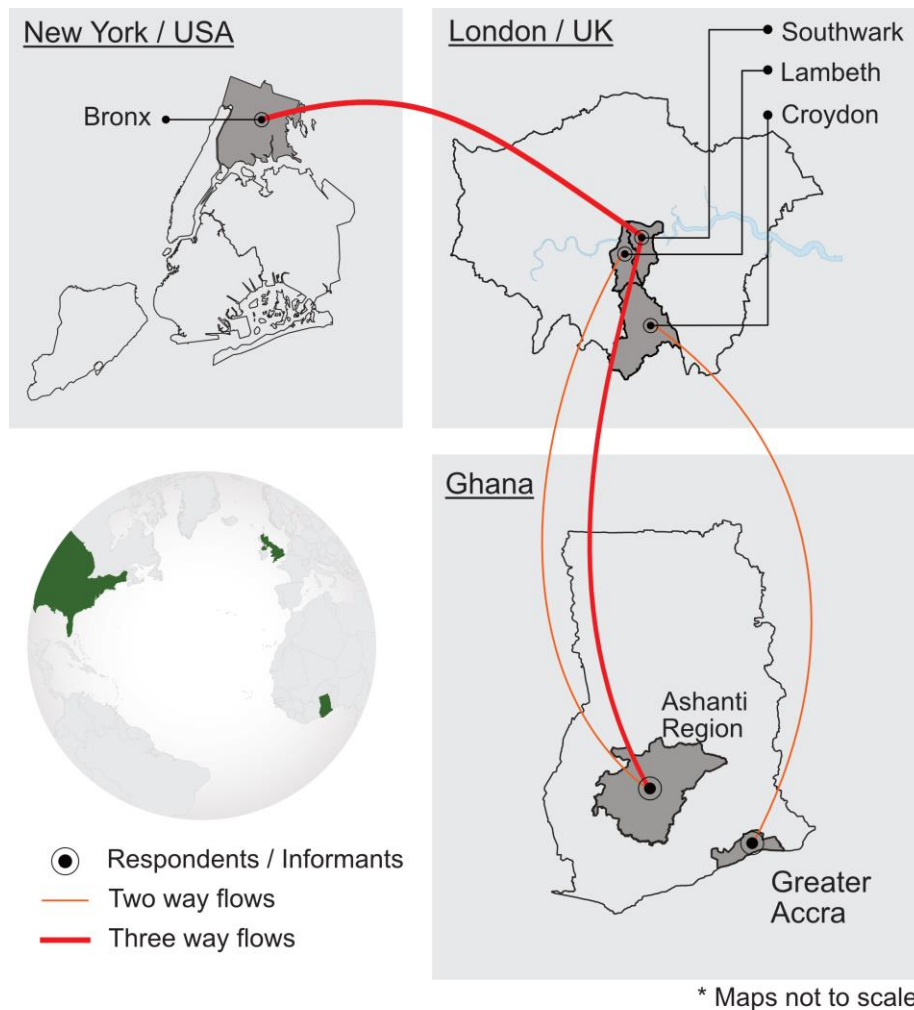


Figure 1: A diagram representing the two-to-three networked locations that research respondents were connected to through movement between places and resource flows

As summarised in Table 1 below, the research participants here were: 42 males and 53 females; 12 children (5-9 years); 21 adolescents (10-19 years); 13 youth (20-24 years); 9 young adults (25-35 years), and 40 adults (36 years and above). Twenty-four young people (aged between 5-24 years) lived in London with parents. Twenty-three migrant parents were also interviewed in London. The interviewees in Ghana included children of migrants, returnee child-migrants and parents, and non-kin children living in transnational households located within towns in the Ashanti Region. In Ghana, I met 18 young people referred as potential interviewees by their relatives in London. Similar to the children in Coe's (2012) research, most of these children had future aspirations of moving 'abroad' or *Aburokyire*. Additionally, I interviewed 22 young people and adults (20 years and above) in Ghana who had caring responsibility for child interviewees. Most caregivers were female; however, there was also a sense of inter-generational and intragenerational caring responsibility for the child from other members of the household, especially from the eldest sibling, uncles, aunts and their grandmothers. In New York, I interviewed three families who were referred to me by the London based respondents. Seventeen out of 23 children living in the UK had been to Ghana for seasonal holidays – often during summer break from school or at Christmas - or for long-term stays. Appendix 1 gives detailed information about the research sample characteristics.

**Table 1: Summary of totals for gender and location per age category**

	Gender		Total (Age/ Gender)	Geographical Location			Total (Age/Loca tion)
	Male	Female		USA	UK	Ghana	
Children (5-9 years)	5	7	<b>12</b>	2	6	4	<b>12</b>
Adolescents (10-19 years)	7	14	<b>21</b>	2	13	6	<b>21</b>
Youth (20-24 years)	7	6	<b>13</b>	0	5	8	<b>13</b>
Young adults (25-35 years)	4	5	<b>9</b>	1	5	3	<b>9</b>
Adults (36 + years)	19	21	<b>40</b>	4	26	10	<b>40</b>
<b>Total (Gender and Location)</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>95</b>

Source: Author (2019).

Research conversations were conducted in either Twi (local Ghanaian language) or English depending on each participant's preference and language competence. All

interviews in Ghana were held in Twi and the majority of parents in London interacted with me in Twi, only speaking in English at specific points when parents wanted to clarify or add to a child's response. Data in Twi was translated to English with care to avoid losing the implied and symbolic meanings of certain statements. Pseudonyms have been used to anonymise and protect the identity of interviewees.

A relational approach facilitated understanding of the multiple subjective or intersubjective experiences existing between children, their parents, carers, siblings, and friends, and their individual or collective actions in times of economic crisis. Hence, the main research sample in this thesis are children of Ghanaian emigrants, whom I consider as competent agents and experts – based on their experience – in narrating their daily life experiences (James & Prout, 1990; James et al., 1998; Holloway & Valentine, 2000). In addition, given that a child's world also embodies social relations, I chose to consider their significant relations, including with adults (e.g. parents, carers, community leaders, etc.) and their friends/peers (Greene & Hill, 2005; Prout, 2005).

### **Recruitment of research informants**

Having considered the constraints in recruiting research informants, it is important to note that in addition to friends and social networks connecting me to their social relations, recruitment of research informants was an on-going process during the period of data collection. I lived in Southwark and Lewisham at different periods since February 2016, thereby allowing me to interact with diverse potential respondents as discussed in the section below on research ethics. In my daily mobilities to work, church, school or the street market, I sometimes had the opportunity of saying '*Ete sen?*' (Twi translation of 'how are you?') when some people looked at me but often wondered if I am Ghanaian or not. This initial expression of concern regarding a person's wellbeing, while waiting at a bus stop or on a long commute, often proved to be a useful conversation starter on general topics though not on personal issues. Such interactions gave me insights into the historical, economic, and social lives of Ghanaians in London, in addition to people expressing interest in being interviewed at a later point. Likewise, my weekend shopping at Peckham market allowed me to share space and time with potential interviewees and relate over shared experiences such as the rising cost of food in London. For instance, while 'in 2015, I purchased ten oranges for one pound, in 2016, it was seven oranges for a pound!' (Field notebook, 2016).

Bearing in mind that this research targeted Ghanaian transnational families living in south London, in order to utilise SMS and ethnographic methods mentioned earlier, the primary participants to be recruited had to meet at least two of the following requirements: (1) availability for conversations; (2) possession of knowledge on social and cultural processes that is less theoretical; and (3) involvement in some form of transnational practice with people living in Ghana.

The research focus on children prompts a fundamental question: what age category of children did I choose as recruits for the research? Scholars (James & Prout, 1990; Holloway & Valentine, 2000; James et al., 1998; Prout, 2005; Wells, 2009) argue that childhood is a culturally variable social phenomenon. Yet the question of who can be considered a child, as well as whether there are any clear distinctions between children, youth, and adult research, has not been extensively discussed (Punch, 1998; Ireland et al., 2009).

The starting point for categorisation of who was considered a child was the legal definition. This is below 18 years of age. Additionally, the age of sexual consent is 16 years old and the age of consent to medical procedures and research is generally taken in the UK to be 12 years old following the principle of 'Gillick competence'. However, on a number of occasions both child and adult informants contrasted their views based on a number of social and cultural expectations, including life transition, gender, age-graded interpretations critical to childhood-adulthood developmental transitions, adult-child relations, and children's agency. For example, amongst Ghanaians, after a child's naming ceremony puberty rites are considered a vital ritual of social transformation for girls. This is performed after their first menstruation to mark an entry into adulthood. However, this is less practised in recent times. Instead, marriage, childbearing, university graduation, travelling, employment, providing money for parents and siblings, and renting accommodations have increasingly become markers of transition from childhood to adulthood. In essence bodily and material assets have symbolically served to create distinctions between childhood, youth, and adulthood (Hendrick, 2008:55-6).

Adults who were associated with the lives of transnational families also offered valuable insights and contacts useful for understanding the individual and collective ways in which Ghanaians and children's lives are affected by migration and political-economic

conditions. These adults included headteachers, pastors, and distant relations of some of the respondents, as well as leaders of transnational migrant associations.

### **Pre-data generation activities**

As a way of promoting a participatory approach to this research, an interview guide (questions and word prompts) was piloted with two families in London and Ghana to inform the development of new areas of questioning, ensure proper language use, and decide on methodological appropriateness (O’Kane, 2008:132). Consequently, informants recommended language simplification for the interview guide and information note documents in order to provide clearly written information about the research objectives and ethical issues that would be accessible across educational divides. Thus, while in the earlier drafts, keywords like social reproduction, austerity, remittances, migration and transnational migration were used, in later drafts these were simplified to terms such as everyday life, cost of living, and what they do ‘in life from morning till evening’. Additionally, the pilot interviews were used to gauge the necessity of adjusting interview techniques and language on the basis of the participant’s age, ability to retain attention, and understanding of the questions. For example, during the pilot stage, techniques were trialled such as asking targeted or broad open-ended questions, and engaging children in play.

### **Data generation techniques**

A range of qualitative data gathering techniques were used. This included textual research methods (e.g. interviews, writing diaries, and focus groups), visual/creative methods (i.e. Ketso and Scrapbooks) and observations. These generated two principle data sets: transcripts, and field notes. While some creative methods were used, they merely served as elicitation tools and not necessarily as part of the analysis. That being said, the implications of these techniques will also be discussed.

### **Unstructured and semi-structured interviews and conversations**

Repeat, unstructured interviews were carried out with young people, parents, carers, and religious and hometown association leaders. The unstructured interviews took the form of conversations<sup>10</sup> aided with a list of semi-structured questions to be introduced during

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<sup>10</sup> While I explained to the respondents that this study was for my PhD, I often used the term *research conversation* in subsequent interactions with the respondents. The term conversation seemed appropriate given that interactions were often done while *on the move* with research

interactions. This approach allowed flexibility to consider unanticipated questions from interviewees while leveraging opportunistic moments to ask pertinent questions (Holmes, 1998:23,63; Punch, 1998; Ireland et al., 2009:82; Punch, 2012). As argued by Nesbitt (2000), Agar (2008), Ireland et al., (2009:80-81), and O'Reilly (2009) unstructured conversations allow for reflexivity for either party, thereby providing a negotiable opportunity where informants can take time to explore their beliefs, fears, hopes, and dreams. It also allows the parties the chance to criticise an opinion, correct it, or point out sensitivities as pertaining to access and cultural values.

Child informants relied on retrospective accounts, tracing key experiences and relationships with their families, as well as their present circumstances (Holmes, 1998:24). Interviews took the form of both one-on-one and group interviews, depending on the informant's preference. In some cases, certain child participants preferred to be interviewed with their friends. This was not only beneficial in terms of understanding young people's shared daily lives, but also creating a supportive environment for statement correction or recalling shared experiences. Having noted this, this raises ethical questions about the confidentiality and consent process regarding such unplanned or unexpected request by the child for additional people to be present in the interview (Holmes, 1998:23; Mayall, 2008:112).

Whilst informants stressed their individual lives in narrative accounts, probing questions were asked in order to understand their lives in relation to significant others (e.g. children, parents, siblings, peers and friends) and their identities (Kvale, 1996; Elder, 1998a; Locke & Lloyd-Sherlock, 2011). This was not only useful in triangulating the views of children within the research sample, but in understanding the role of the family as a structure within which the child is emplaced while avoiding oversimplification of agency.

Children and adolescent interviews lasted approximately 20 to 30 minutes, as they often lost attention and interest beyond this time. Adult interviews lasted no more than two hours, although were often performed in-between or during other domestic tasks, such as cooking.

During interviews in the UK, certain children below 7 years old struggled to understand my English accent. Parents of these children assisted with the interviews by

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subject(s). For instance, while walking to a shopping mall or while on a bus travelling together. Also, to many of them the word interview sounded examinable, interrogatory or journalistic to them, especially when for instance the UK government is already policing families on welfare matters.

using certain English phonetics to relay the question without redefining a child's view (Mayall, 2008:118).

Apart from meeting with informants at agreed places (including home and school) for interviews; there were shared moments of interviews while walking to these places. This 'interview on the move' became particularly useful in a number of ways. First, given that in certain cases children were busy with housework and became tired afterwards, walking with them provided an organic opportunity to further participate in interviews. For instance, morning walks to school offered the opportunity to ask them important questions regarding work done before leaving for school. Secondly, it seemed that young participants and married women were more open to sharing sensitive issues, such as household tensions or money problems, during these private walks; most of which they would never mention in the presence of another family relation. In effect, walking while interviewing was empowering. Thirdly, those moments of walking with child informants in Ghana allowed me to acquire knowledge about new environments including cultural beliefs attached to reproduction or certain environmental hazards as noted in the conversation between Yaw (Male, 20-24 years, High school graduate, Kumasi) while walking to the farm:

Yaw: *'Do you see this crab? They show up after rainfall and if a barren woman collects it, cook it and eats it she can be fertile to give birth.'*

Michael: *'On really. That's interesting. Do you know anyone who has had a child through this practice?'*

Yaw: *'No! But I lived with my grandmother when I was very young, and we use to walk together to the farm so she told me that. There is also a stream nearby. A lot of the streams here can overflow their banks and sometimes if you are not careful crossing it you can be carried away by it. But there is a particular stream, it has never carried anyone. It's named after a woman, a fetish priestess. Because it is a woman it is very caring, and never carries human beings away. My grandmother taught me a lot of these things, so I don't get into trouble.'*

Or this conversation with Ofori:

Michael: *'What kind of career are you interested in? Farming?'*

Ofori: *'There is no future for me in this town. I finished high school and I wanted to go to the military or do computer training. But my father says he does not have money now for school fees. My father has a lot of his siblings in London but none of them are willing to send me money. For me I no longer expect overseas relations to help me. I have said to myself; I will self-help. One day they will wake up and realise that I travelled overseas without their knowledge.'*

In essence, these movements were important to understanding the respondents and their environments as well as the intersection between people and the material aspects that shape their daily lives.

In addition to 'interview on the move', public spaces were used for interviews – particularly in London and New York. Some adults preferred meeting at their workplace for interviews during light working periods and lunch breaks. Additionally, some interviews took place at coffee shops or at the mall after shopping. While it can be assumed that public spaces offer a relaxed interview atmosphere, in certain instances, the choice of such casual places was because some young respondents felt ashamed about me coming to their house because of their dependence on their parents for accommodation even into adulthood. Moreover, some noted that their home was too cluttered and noisy for interviews. Consequently, while public spaces such as parks, restaurants, or their community churches were preferred places, there were constraints. Some young people spoke in hushed tones to avoid people hearing their responses. Likewise, recording interviews in public spaces was challenging due outside noise, requiring diligent listening and transcription.

### **Participant and semi-participant observation**

Observation of the participant's everyday lives can allow the researcher to understand what people *say* they do and what they *actually* do (Ireland et al., 2009:100; O'Reilly, 2009; Punch, 2012:1015). Aside from regular visits to participant's houses in Ghana, a weekend overnight observation was completed with two families. This allowed for observation and understanding of family arrangements, especially early morning tasks are undertaken by children, and how obligations are negotiated according to gender and age. Although staying at informants' home was possible in Ghana, it was unmanageable and



impractical in London due to lack of sleeping space, and further perhaps due to concepts of clearly defined children's spaces. For instance, children's rooms in London were seen as fixed places that could not be converted into a guest or adult room, whereas in Ghana the rooms offered up as sleeping spaces were children's rooms. As I sometimes felt as if I was displacing children's autonomous status, I did not make this a repeated practice.

Nonetheless, behaviour observation is a meaningful way of discovering people's tacit and explicit cultural knowledge, including what they may not talk about (Spradley, 1979:9). For example, Rose's father told me in an interview session that his children have never been sent home for non-payment of school fees. However, one afternoon Rose (Female, 10-19 years, High school pupil, Kumasi) returned home early from school unhappy. In an interaction with her, while she was preparing to do house chores, I discovered she had been sent home due to school fees non-payment. This allowed me to ask further questions about this experience. Likewise, while a number of men informed me that they did not mind taking on culturally defined roles of women, I observed the tensions that ensued especially when women asked their husbands to, for instance, serve food or wash the dishes, especially whilst the women were busy with other domestic tasks. Thus, observation was useful in validating certain responses.

Throughout the research process, participant observation status was kept within a semi-participation level rather than full-participation. Like Corsaro's (2005) respondents, the children in Ghana did recognise me as an adult – by using salutations such as 'Sir' – when I met them in their school, classroom, or playground. While this can be attributed to personal characteristics such as my physical size and hair loss, my adult identity was also a product of the research site (Holmes, 1998:5,11; James et al. 1998). Most schools have a clear distinction between children and adults. This was created by encounters and bodily expressions such as: being introduced to children by the headmaster of a school as a 'researcher'; a child being asked to bring me a chair to sit; and standing without my hands behind.

Having considered the challenge of a full-participant observer role, James et al. (1998) suggest that semi-participant observation in children's daily routine tasks is appropriate (Lareau, 2011:9; Punch, 2012:1016). In this regard, I sometimes participated as a way of giving a 'helping hand', in children's task, thereby using those events to negotiate entry into the 'children's world' and ask opportunistic questions (Katz, 2004; Corsaro, 2005;

O'Reilly, 2009; Lareau, 2011). For instance, I helped in fetching water and husking corn. However, sometimes my entry into their world required them to teach me how to do these tasks. For instance, Millicent (5-9 years) and Rose (10-19 years) taught me how to harvest a cocoyam. Laughing at me on such occasions, they suggested I am not only an 'outsider' but also an incompetent adult and they were the experts.

Apart from entering the 'children's world', I did participate in the 'adult world'. For instance, when Isaac's parents invited me to his grandmother's funeral and wedding event in London, I was asked to be in charge of collecting donations. Not only did my time and monetary commitment suggest my solidarity with the family, but I used that opportunity to also understand the material and emotional solidarity of Ghanaian's in dealing with crisis and further understanding my evolving experience of trust and rapport with the family on financial matters. Additionally, as a semi-participant observer, I attended bi-weekly meetings of the Tech Hometown Association in London where I had the chance of meeting some parents and children, collecting contact details of those who seemed interested in the research for follow up interviews, as well as joining in as a participant-observer. At their meetings, I was asked to sometimes help with carrying food to the event centre. Similarly, in Ghana, I was asked by the headmaster of a school in Ghana to 'encourage' adults at a Parent's and Teachers Association meeting.

Bearing in mind that observations are useful in accessing children's world and their significant others, it is important to also mention that this is a useful technique for identifying with informants as a *listener*, rather than being perceived as someone who is always asking questions. As argued by Houghton & McColgan (1995:69), 'when children think you are a listener, they will initiate conversations with you. If they know you are slow to criticise or difficult to shock, they will talk to you about anything and everything'. In this regard, I always ensured active listening, avoided quick interjections in addition to being unauthoritative, respectful and positive in expressions to signalling interest (Thorne, 1993). I avoided criticisms and shouting at children even when they attempted something dangerous. Rather I did tell them about the risk of the action they were taking to allow them to think about the negative consequences. Essentially, *listening more*, observations and positive reactions were useful ways in cultivating a positive researcher-research subject relationship.

### **Creative visual methods: scrapbooks, Ketso and time-use diaries**

In addition to interviews and observations, participatory materials such as scrapbook and time-use tasks were undertaken by young people. As argued by scholars (Punch 1998; Langevang 2007; Ireland et al. 2009:66,116; Punch 2012), children's skills, experiences, competencies and preferences differ depending on their cultural experiences and background; thus, while some children and young people preferred writing or talking, others chose drawing. Given that children know best their competences, I decided to offer them the opportunity of choosing between a scrapbook and a notebook for time-use diary entries. Ketso was equally useful in group discussions or teamwork.

These research tools only served as data elicitation materials, and not necessarily for data collection for analysis. They allowed children to document important aspects of their lives, which served as central areas for research conversations with them.

#### *Scrapbook*

A majority of the child participants (aged between 5 and 12 years) preferred to use a scrapbook to express their views and experiences based on a key question from the interview guide. Scrapbook tasks served as a pre-interview activity. Usually, once a topic was introduced, the task was to be completed within three to five days of a subsequent meeting. Follow up meetings to the task allowed for relevant questions to be asked about their personal and shared moments. For instance, from drawings, questions might be asked such as: 'Who is this? What did you do over there? Where is this place?'

Scrapbook usage was employed with the intention of allowing children to take an active role and control in the research process (Hill, 1997; Greene & Hill, 2005; Cheney, 2011). In particular, scrap tasks offered children some level of control over time, pace, and the content and depth of what they did or wrote about (Bragg and Buckingham, 2008; Pimlott-Wilson, 2012). The scrapbook package contained a notebook, stickers, coloured pens or pencils and other forms of memorabilia. With these, children were able to express their perspectives and feelings regarding topics such as school, housework, family relations and separation, for example. In this regard, expressing important aspects of their lives created the agenda for future conversations and provided them with agency.

However, there were a number of challenges experienced in working with children using this technique. First, whilst most children in the UK preferred this method, it was expensive to offer it to all interested child informants. On many occasions where there was

more than one child in the house, it became difficult to offer two scrapbook kits, and the child who did not get one often became upset. That being said, children in Ghana did not demonstrate a similar high desire for the scrapbook option as it was not a major part of children's education or culture as compared to the UK. For some, it was the first time using a scrapbook. A second challenge was that certain materials in the kit, including the stickers, pen, glue stick and scissors were distracting. For first-timers, the scrapbook activity was a time to explore these new tools playfully instead of focusing on the task at hand. However, as a qualitative and participatory researcher, this was not completely negative given that this was also another way of allowing children to express their creativity and present other relevant aspects. The role of play became evident in scrapbook tasks. Third, and linked to the second point, is the fact that using items like the scissors posed a physical risk for younger children (e.g. cutting with safety scissors and trying to taste the glue). Thus, there was a need for vigilant monitoring the child's use and play. Forth, some parents were quick to suggest whether a child should be given the scrapbook or not, by looking at the cover design illustration of other younger children using the scrapbook. In one particular instance when a 13-year-old wanted to make a scrapbook, the mother asked her to use a journal instead, because she felt the scrapbook was for younger children. Lastly, especially where there were two children in the same home, the children were easily drawn into comparing their work to each other. Thus, care had to be given to compliment equally and de-emphasise perfection.

### *Writing diaries*

A majority of young people aged 15 to 25 chose to use their diaries to write accounts about: their daily activities, feelings, and life experiences; their relationships with family members, friends, religious leaders and others they encounter; the places they go to in a day (Punch 1998; Langevang 2007; Lareau, 2011:336; Punch 2012); or a specific issue that came up through conversations. Similar to the scrapbook activity, journaling was done before face-to-face interactions, thereby allowing the young person to reflect and then write at a more convenient time, such as after house chores. Moreover, dairies were useful in ascertaining children and young people's time-use on a weekly basis including weekdays and weekends, and what they do by themselves or with other people at school, home, and their social participation.

Having noted the scrapbook and diaries activities, it is also worth mentioning that some form of reflexivity was required in the process. Task-based activities were more or less another form of ‘work’(Barker & Weller 2003:46). Consequently, certain children, especially younger children and girls, failed to accomplish given tasks because of housework demands, in addition to their schoolwork (Punch, 1998). Similarly, sometimes children were shouted at or threatened with discipline, including the risk of being sent to Ghana by their parents, when they were perceived to be playing rather than concentrating on research tasks. Moreover, while the techniques of writing diaries and scrapbooks offered children some control and flexibility to express themselves, some younger children, especially in Ghana, did not have privacy in their house to share their views in a diary. They felt their views could be read by someone they shared a room with, or by an adult in the house, who might penalise them for revealing sensitive information. In essence, children’s place in the home as a private space required careful consideration regarding how confidential the child’s perspectives will remain in a shared space (e.g. shared bedroom) to avoid compromising such an important ethical requirement. Thus, in such situations where privacy could not be ensured, semi-structured conversation was used for gaining children’s perspectives. Likewise, it was also important to understand the process and the place by which children expressed themselves. For instance, parents or elder siblings sometimes tried to assist children, thereby imposing their views on children. Under such circumstances, I encouraged parents to afford children freedom in expressing themselves.

#### *Group discussions and the use of Ketso*

In total, six group discussions were organised with 5-10 participants in each drawn from the interview sample. Discussions focused on general issues noted from the interviews, rather than personal experiences. Since even people within the same household responded differently to the same question, the discussions allowed for clarifying antithetical and opposing statements, identifying shared and symbolic meanings, and existing norms among informants (Veale, 2005:267; Bolin, 2006:9; Mayall, 2008:114; Ireland et al., 2009:91; O’Reilly, 2009; Coe, 2011).

Ketso – a creative approach to giving informants a voice (see: <https://ketso.com/learn-about-ketso>) – was used as the elicitation tool during the group discussions. It is a hands-on method whereby participants express their views in a tree-like diagram with ideas written on leaves and attached to branches. The branches also are

connected to a central theme explored by the participants. This technique was utilised by the children in group discussions. The themes covered work, religion, social life, and education to understand their role and their intersubjective experiences within these areas of reproduction. A Ketso toolkit/bag comes with a pen and other materials, including icons that are used to prioritise ideas for in-depth discussions. Discussions were held either on a weekday at a school, or on weekends at church premises, often lasting between 45 and 90 minutes. During discussions, I played the role of a facilitator by asking questions and directing the conversations to ensure that all participants had a chance to share their perspectives. Discussions were recorded after obtaining permission from participants, and the ideas transcribed later. It is worth mentioning that Ketso can be complex to use for a first-time user. Thus, a test run was given with a group of children in my house before using it in two schools in Ghana. As a hands-on tool, its use by young participants and the research was perfected over time.

Research has shown the importance of group task in understanding the dynamics of children's peer relations (Langevang, 2007). During group discussions, children, especially older boys, demonstrated peer-to-peer intimidation towards girls (Veale, 2005:269). For instance, even when all group participants were given a pen with the liberty to pick a leaf to write their ideas on, some boys felt that because they had 'nice handwriting' they had to write for some of the girls or younger boys, thus dominating or preventing others from expressing their views freely. Therefore, as the facilitator I ensured that anyone who had an idea had the chance to express it. Moreover, while the school served as an important research site in understanding children's perspectives on their constraints and opportunities with education, the ethos of most Ghanaian schools seemed to have some potential impact on children's expression. For instance, during the first group discussion, children were less vocal because of the fear of speaking English,<sup>11</sup> making a grammatical mistake, and being penalised or laughed at by their peers. While the children were not required to write or speak in English, an effort was generally made by the children to write and speak English because of the school ethos that requires them to communicate in English or risk being punished. In fact, it is written boldly on school buildings 'SPEAK ENGLISH'. In anticipation of the effect of these school rules on children's expression, Ketso was explicitly used to facilitate

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<sup>11</sup> Throughout school hours, English is the primary medium of instruction. Except during their local languages class period (such as Twi), pupils are expected to speak English. Outside such periods, pupils are penalised if vernacular is spoken.

non-verbal expressions. Despite the challenge of school ethos and control from peers, I discovered that after my first meeting with group participants, a rapport developed, and child participants were eager to express an idea in writing on a leaf for attachment to a branch. In effect, the challenge of shyness and power imbalances that often occurs in one-on-one interviews with children in the school was mitigated in using this tool.

Having talked about the effect of the school ethos on the research, it is worth mentioning the effect of the research on the school and children's daily activities. For instance, some of the children who participated in the group discussion did so during their lunch break when their peers were eating or playing. Moreover, sometimes my presence in the classroom diverted student's attention towards me. In effect, the researcher and the research process were likely to interrupt children's learning and leisure.

Furthermore, participant selection for the group discussion appeared to have been influenced by the headteacher. In a research debriefing interaction with the headteacher, it was discovered the teacher's selection was informed by a bias consideration of student's whom the school considers as academically good because they wanted to save or promote school's reputation as an excellent school to me as an 'outsider' or 'researcher'. Thus, in addition to the five children initially selected by the teacher, five more children were selected whom the teachers considered to be academically weak, as it was emphasised to the teachers that the research was not in any way related to the children or the school's academic competence. Related to the concern of selection bias, is the ethical concern of voluntary participation. Bearing in mind that, the research participation process was explained to the children, and the fact that they could withdraw from the research at any time, the school's ethos expects pupils to comply to teachers directives, and thus was likely to compromise their voluntary participation, especially when students were called upon by their teachers. Thus, when students did not show up to subsequent meetings, it was not reported to the headmaster, as they were likely to be punished for it. Rather a student's absence was taken as an indication of withdrawal of participation.

### **Language and translation**

Research conversations were conducted in either Twi or English depending on each participant's preference and language competence. Interestingly, patterns of language competence emerged during the conversations: all second-generation immigrant children interacted in English. However, those in the UK who had stayed in Ghana for more than six

months often responded with Twi and English, whilst all interviews in Ghana were held in Twi. The majority of the parents in London interacted in Twi, and only spoke in English at specific points when they wanted to clarify or add to a child's response. Moreover, London-based parents switched to Twi to explain an issue like a child's delayed transition to adulthood or independence (such as finding their own accommodation) because they found it worrying, and felt that their concern would upset their child if heard in English. In essence, older children's experience of crisis could result in conflict with parents if they discovered a lack of solidarity and empathy. This suggests that language is more than a medium of interaction (Lareau, 2011:325-26). Consequently, it is important to pay attention to the participant's 'language use, their conceptual meanings and their actions to piece together a picture of the social interaction... to know about different codes of conduct and communication' (Nesbitt, 2000; Christensen, 2004). Data in Twi was transcribed into English with care to ensure that the implied and symbolic meanings of certain statements were not lost (Have, 1999; Peña, 2007).

### **Data Recording**

Depending on the environment, research interviews or conversations, observations, events of the research setting and questions from respondents were either tape-recorded, and/or noted in a hardcover field notebook or digital notebook app (i.e. Evernote or Google Keep). All data was stored securely on a personal computer, with an external hard drive back-up.

Most participants permitted the recording of conversations with a digital voice recorder. Tape recording was only introduced after the first two meetings with a participant. This was due to the research subject's migration status, and the anxieties related to the recording of people. For instance, as mentioned earlier, before and during the time of data collection, migrants were scapegoated, and immigration was blamed for economic hardships in the UK. Consequently, there was heightened enforcement of undocumented migrants living in the UK (Department for Communities and Local Government and Clark, 2015; Home Office and Brokenshire, 2015). Thus, requests for recordings were only made on the third meeting with informants, by which time most had a better understanding of the research and established trust. Similarly, the fieldwork in Ghana coincided with revelations of corrupt public servants involving taped evidence. Thus, the mere mention the word 'record' or having the recording device visible was enough reason to scare people away, as



indicated by feedback from pilot interview respondents in Ghana. Hence, the strategy of building rapport and informed knowledge about the research before recording was essential, especially in meetings with adult respondents. For this reason, it appears important for the researcher to understand the political-economic context within which certain tools or techniques are to be utilised.

Contrary to the adult respondents, young people expressed high curiosity about the tape recorder, given that it was somehow big. However, it was explained to them that it was simply to record the conversation. They were also allowed to listen to parts of recorded audio to help them understand the purpose of the device. This explanation helped to avoid further obstruction or attention on the recorder during normal conversations (Shaffer, 1993:19 quoted in Woodhead & Faulkner, 2008). Still, sometimes children tampered with the recorder and mistakenly pressed 'stop'. Thus, to avoid losing recordings, a phone in aeroplane mode was used as a back-up recording device, in addition to the professional recording device.

Further digital notebook were additional tools used to record perspectives and field experiences, including typed short prompt reminder words/phrases and taking photographs. This was sometimes done with the digital app, Evernote. Later in the day or within the same week, these jotted notes served as a mental reminder of the context of some of the conversations for a fuller description of experiences (Spradley, 1979:69-77; Lareau, 1996, cited in O'Reilly, 2009;). Besides, digital photographs were not only important in capturing scenes but also the context of a conversation, which was useful to analysis especially during a participant-observer scenario such as housework, church, or funeral.

Likewise, I kept a research journal to record my experiences, respondent's reactions, intellectual ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs and problems encountered in the field (Spradley, 1979:76; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). Where it was impossible to write, especially after a long and tiring day, I simply took digital notes using my phone's voice recorder to talk about my experience. This was useful for transcription and providing a vivid account later on. Some of these recordings were referenced repeatedly, thereby helping to keep a familiar account of the audio interviews during and before analysis.

### **Transcription and data analysis**

Recorded conversations were transcribed and compared against field notes. Moreover, transcribed files and field notes – the main data source – were converted for

analysis using NVivo. Transcription and data analysis began within a short period of data collection commencement as noted below. This consisted of examining the research field notes and transcribed data to understand and categorise various facets of everyday life and also the relationships between cultural symbols.

### *Data transcription*

By January 2018, 310 pages of field notes had been accumulated (in four fieldwork diaries). Approximately 490 hours of audio recordings (including recordings of research interviews, group discussions, and casual conversations as well as other research encounters) were collected, leading to 450 typed pages.

Generally, all interviews were digitally recorded (in addition to taking shorthand notes in a field notebook when possible) and transcribed later. Non-verbal expressions (e.g. sadness or a smile) were also recorded in transcriptions (Jenks, 2012). Within 24 hours of an encounter in the field, recordings were typed, and the condensed accounts explicated for a fuller description of statements and observations. These were equally used for coding and analysis in a cyclical approach, which will be explained and discussed below.

Research has shown that the amount of data gathered through ethnographic research has both pros and cons. On one hand, the rich and high volume of data gathered to the level of saturation can help in the meta-analysis of data. On the other hand, one needs to be able to manage and overcome the challenge of evaluating such a high amount of data. Roughly five hours was spent in transcription for every hour of one-on-one recording. However, more time was needed when transcribing focus group discussions, which sometimes, due to the need for translated transcription from Twi to English, and the need for data structuring per gender, location or age, took approximately 20 hours for 2 hours of recording.

### *Data analysis*

Data analysis was an equally time-consuming exercise due to the voluminous amount of data that was accumulated across three countries. Whilst both transcription and analysis were done simultaneously, further time was set aside to structure and code the data into various categories.

Transcription-to-data analysis involved examining the transcribed data, organising data chronologically and thematically with anonymised household and names (i.e. Household 1, Ama Duku; Household, 2, etc.). The transcribed data was regularly reviewed

using thematic analysis to condense responses by organising them into themes while systematically examining the various aspects relevant to the research questions (Corbin and Strauss, 2015). This involved coding and annotating transcripts with ideas or perspectives that were similar in nature in order to be categorised in relation to some already known themes deduced from a literature review on transnational migration, childhoods, and social reproduction. Coding of gathered data was also useful in assigning perspectives under categories, concepts, themes and theoretical ideas following research conversations. Initial thematic codes included 'movements', 'sending money', 'kinds of people', 'jobs', 'communication', 'housing', 'education', among others. Additionally, part of the exercise of developing these initial codes was comparing perspectives and experiences whilst combining overlapping ideas to form a more holistic view of an issue.

After the initial process, a focused coding framework was employed to bring about a deeper understanding of the thematic codes that emerged in relation to the cultural meaning of daily life organisation. At this stage, over twenty codes were eventually drawn out from the existing data relevant to themes such as reasons for moving from one place to the other, parental attitudes to children and childhood, children's views about the relationship between work and education, reasons for returning to Ghana, reasons for sending money home, relationships and interactions with blood and non-blood relations, children and youth aspirations, gender and power relations. Additionally, as suggested by Charmaz, categories can further lead to an analytical framework (2006:516). With this in mind, whilst coding, some recurring patterns emerged which were important to understanding the data, and therefore the lives of the research interview respondents. For instance, where household division of labour was frequent in transcribed interviews across multiple households, the interviews were copied, coded and categorised based on context for further analysis to ensure that beyond the household experience, they were relevant to the research questions. This category, for instance, later on incorporated gender roles with 'children's economic and domestic roles', 'male breadwinner and female homemaker', 'older children's caring responsibilities', amongst other areas of classification. Primarily, in coding I moved from a series of micro-codes gradually building to meta codes such as 'social networks', 'gender roles', 'reciprocity', 'chain migration', 'household habits', 'forms of rituals' 'reverse remittance', 'material culture', 'doing family', 'forms of capital accumulation', 'coping

strategies' and 'migration motives' that then became the principal focus of the Chapters in this dissertation.

The process of coding and thematic analysis at the initial stages of interviews and transcription was useful in gaining further insights, asking core relevant questions in subsequent meetings with research subjects, identifying relationships and key trends, and eventually in the effective analytical writing (Spradley, 1979:42; Mason, 1996; O'Reilly, 2009). Similarly, with the voluminous amount of data that was generated, the coding or thematic categorisation was equally important for formulating a sizable group of themes to work with (Cresswell, 2003).

The perspectives gathered through the thematic analysis were used to highlight specific, but dominant, narratives across various themes and social categories (Have, 1999; Ireland et al., 2009:84), and to identify relationships or differences in views and practices, with respect to context. However, some areas not covered in the initial literature review and analysis was further addressed through theoretical sampling, whereby drawing on the existing sample, interview questions were posed that would fill gaps in the literature. For instance through theoretical sampling in relation to understanding the coping strategies of Ghanaian transnational households, new themes emerged, including: the city as a site for exclusion of the poor; urban individuals seeking work and urban flight due to rising cost of living; children's peer networks and the role of parent's network; gendered tensions and gendered freedoms; and social and economic solidarity through ethnic networks. These categories and the empirical views were used to further interrogate theoretical views.

Moreover, given the multi-sited nature of this study, with a linked yet heterogeneous group of Ghanaians, some of the analysis was tied around geographical conditions of a place in relation to historical, political and socio-economic conditions of Ghana, USA and the UK. This offered a framework that can critically bring meaning and significance to the daily lives and practices of the research subjects in a cultural context. For instance, parental attitudes towards children and childhood were important in constructing how parents felt about the moral deficit to raising their children overseas. Ghana was largely considered a place of moral abundance for children to be trained and socialised into a moral agent. This view was important in understanding that apart from economic constraints, moral expectations were important in shaping transnational practices of moving between Ghana, USA and the UK.

Consequently, in thinking about how to approach the organisation of these Chapters to give meaning to how economic crisis impacts childhood from a life course approach, inspiration was taken from the literature on children and young people's emplacement within society and the transnational household. Therefore, Chapter 5 focuses on children's lives, while Chapter 5 and 7 discuss the experiences of both children and other young people but with some useful findings on transitions to adulthood.

The entire writing process could be summarised as an inter-data experience of having completed the literature review and gone through the empirical data, I had to reflect, understand, or read further the theoretical data to gain further insights into theories relevant to the thesis and then look for contextual data to support existing theoretical views or to interpret it differently.

### **Ethical implications and reflexivity**

Research with people, particularly children aged below 18 years, poses a number of ethical implications. Prior to drafting the research methodology, there were concerns on how to appropriately address these complexities. In addition to traditional ethical concerns, such as informed consent and dissemination and analysis of data, the section below will address other ethical considerations. In particular, there is a need for researchers to have cultural competency, and to incorporate relevant, local cultural understanding into formal and informal ethical requirements in order to achieve participatory research in a reflexive way.

#### *Informed consent and voluntary participation*

Informed consent simply means providing potential research informants accurate, adequate and relevant research related information to enable them to decide, voluntarily, on their participation in research (Holmes, 1998; Emond, 2005; Morrow, 2008; Beazley et al., 2009; Ireland et al., 2009). Potential research participants were well informed about the research purpose, methods, expectations from an informant, researcher's identity, funding body and the intended use of data collected. In order to establish informed consent, prior to admitting an individual into the research group introductory meetings were held in the (potential) interviewee's home. Adult interviewees were asked to read an 'information note' and 'consent form' describing the research, in addition to being given an oral explanation of confidentiality and anonymity. Adult participants were given the opportunity to clarify any information and ask follow-up questions. Potential participants who expressed interest were

asked to sign a consent form. After approximately six meetings with parent participants, recruitment of children in the household was sought with parental approval. This process of from-parents-to-children allowed parents to understand the nature of the research thoroughly before interviewing their children.

Personal consent was requested from children aged 16 years or over. With those under 16, parental or caretaker consent was sought in the line of clearly conveyed information regarding the research objectives; activities involved; the right to continue or withdraw voluntarily at any point without penalisation; data storage and utilisation; the fact that their views would be analysed and reported for academic purpose; and noting that there will be no right or wrong answers to questions (Holmes, 1998:16). To avoid assumed consent with participants under 16-years-old, verbal consent from the child was obtained before obtaining a parent's/guardian's signature on the child's consent form. As noted earlier, in the pre-data collection section, the research was explained using simplified terms as well as their right to opt-out at any time. In cases where the parent had consented, but there was some indication of pressure regarding the child's consent – for example, parents scolded the child to participate, and/or silence or lack of a response in conversations with the child – the interviews were discontinued. Thus, in abiding by the informed consent principles young people's capacity to make decisions was acknowledged (Emond, 2005; Morrow, 2008; Ireland et al., 2009; O'Reilly, 2009). Generally, research consent was a negotiated and on-going process, rather than a static practice, thereby allowing participants to opt-in and -out of various activities (Punch, 1998; Ireland et al., 2009:87; O'Reilly, 2009).

#### *Ownership of materials*

Another ethical dilemma involved the ownership of work done by child respondents (e.g. drawings and worksheets in the scrapbook and written diaries). With few exceptions, where children in Ghana asked for copies of their work to be given to their parents in London, child participants were allowed to keep the originals of their work materials. With the child's permission, copies of relevant drawings, worksheets, and diaries were made in some situations to help bring some context to some of the research analysis.

#### *Anonymity and confidentiality*

In the information leaflet provided, research participants were assured of two important ethical issues. First, the anonymity of their identity as research participants,

including changing the participant's name, location, age, and likeness in photos and videos. Both pseudonyms, and concealing of faces or eyes in photos and videos were applied (Spradley, 1979:38; Holmes, 1998; Ireland et al., 2009:129; O'Reilly, 2009). In this regard, children and parents were allowed to choose a pseudonym name. Age groups, rather than specific ages, were used when quoting a respondent.

### *Expressions of emotions of life course and life history research*

Life-course and life history research can cause some emotional distress to research subjects due to recollection of challenging life experiences such as unemployment, family separation, loss of life, income and inability to pursue life aspirations (Langevang 2007). For instance, Afia's mother, Florence (36+ years, Nurse, London) cried when she recalled the death of her brother. On the one hand, despite this foreseen challenge, research informants shared their life experiences as trust and rapport developed over time. On the other hand, the emotional implication for research subjects must be considered (Holmes, 1998:25; Ireland et al., 2009:35; Morrow, 2008). In some circumstances, where a respondent became visibly uncomfortable, they were asked if they would like to take a break.

Depending on the circumstance, sympathy and comfort were expressed by offering water, tissues, or asking to come back another time. For instance, while in Ghana, Nana Sarpong (Male, 10-19 years, Junior high school pupil, Kumasi) and Mercy (Female, 10-19 years, Junior high school pupil, Kumasi), both expressed excessive sadness at different research encounters pertaining to parent-child separation. At this time, I offered a tissue paper and solidarity was expressed by saying a line to the effect of: 'I am sorry you have not seen your parents in a while'. However, this was also an opportunity to gently further the conversation by asking: 'how have you been managing the absence of your parents?' In Mercy's response, she did reveal some of the coping strategies, an important aspect of the research questions. Hence under critical moments of expression of loss or pain, material and emotional solidarity were expressed, while being careful not to tell the subject how to feel or behave.<sup>12</sup> Expression of solidarity is culturally required but was also useful in sustaining trust and relationships with respondents. Additionally, it is worth mentioning that after one-on-one interviews, interviewee feedback showed that the research process allowed them to reflect on their lives – including life challenges, opportunities, and future aspirations. For

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<sup>12</sup> Considering for instance cultural expressions around emotions and masculinity that *Obarima ensu* (males do not cry).

many participants, they rarely had the chance to engage in historical conversations about their education, work, and family relations, and thus having the opportunity to discuss some of these aspects was cathartic, especially when they recalled their resilience in terms of ‘how far [they] have come’ as John (Male, 20-24 years, Unemployed graduate, Accra) noted.

### *Dissemination*

Preliminary findings of the research have been presented at various events, including academic and policy arenas. Most of the presentations focused on the intersection between childhood and transnational migration. Presentations at some conferences have been useful in receiving feedback for further contemplation and the writing process of the research.

Additionally, some of the preliminary findings were shared with the research respondents, including personal accounts that were used in draft Chapter contributions for edited collections. While there have not been any oppositions to accounts presented in the research, making the preliminary findings available to the participants was meaningful because they were able to see how the research complied with the ethical standards put forward initially (Lareau, 2011:330). Further, respondent’s feedback in the analysis stage was useful in authenticating data (Lareau, 2011:328).

Upon completion of the PhD research, participants will be informed of how to obtain a copy of the thesis report, if they wish. A 2-page brochure summarising the key general findings will be produced, and made available to them in addition to a thank you card (Lareau, 2011:331). This strategy can reduce the risk of cynicism and respondent attrition in future research projects (Ireland et al., 2009:69,144). Similarly, public events will also be organised (e.g. seminar or exhibition) to disseminate the findings of the research and its policy implications to various stakeholders.

### *Leaving (the community) and showing appreciation*

Though accessing informants was complex, it was equally difficult leaving those in Ghana to return to the UK after data collection was complete because trusted, meaningful relationships had been formed (Punch, 1998; Ireland et al., 2009:112; O’Reilly, 2009). This was particularly evidenced with regards to the child participants since each time I called their parents and had an opportunity to speak with some of the child respondents; they asked ‘When are you coming back?’



While it can be said that I physically left the research communities, I remain connected with them through digital technologies. For instance, in some cases where certain respondents are closer to my place of residence, I paid occasional visits or made phone calls during Christmas, New Year or a child respondent's birthday. Similarly, I did send the child respondent's birthday and exams success cards when I was made aware of such occasions. Moreover, the older children in the research sample proactively maintain contact through social media, such as WhatsApp and Facebook. In effect, these social media platforms connections have helped to reduce the effect of physical separation.

Showing appreciation is a key Ghanaian local custom. Prior to departing from Ghana and the completion of fieldwork in the USA and south London, participants received phone calls, text messages, and visits (when possible) to express thanks. For one family in Ghana who had migrated to Accra, a visit was paid to their new residence to bring some small gifts (bread, notebooks and pens for the children) as local custom dictates. It is clear that in maintaining these contacts, it is likely to be easier to reach and engage the respondents on future research work.

Despite the cultural tenets to be followed, the issue of incentives or reciprocity with informants is another contested ethical dilemma. In addition to the fact that local custom in Ghana expects one to be appreciative and kind, the provision of incentives in this case was not intended in any way a means to bribe the research subjects. For instance, most of the transnational families were materially capable of obtaining the mentioned items themselves (Holmes, 1998:28). Moreover, a reciprocal gesture was appropriate given that on a number of occasions informants, including children, shared food such as biscuits or a meal. Moreover, sometimes children had to discontinue their income-generating work for the interview session to be made possible as noted in the encounter with Ama Duku (Female, 10-19 years, High school student and water vendor, Kumasi): 'After completing all housework it was about 7:00AM. I rested for an hour and then went to buy food to eat. It was 12:00PM. I was supposed to go and sell water but because of the interview I stopped.'

Reciprocating a kind gesture was also deemed necessary to avoid being labelled as '*boniaye*' – 'ungrateful person'. That being said, it is useful to mention that, prior to the research and in the course of the data collection phase any notion of 'give me something for something' was avoided (Holmes, 1998:27-8; Ireland et al., 2009:37).

*Negotiating insider and outsider status, power relations and reflexivity*

In the field ‘one’s basic humanity is emphasised, and such traits as age, gender, temperament and ethnicity become, if anything, magnified’

(Wax, 1979:108)

Prior to embarking on field data collection, I was conscious of my position and certain social and economic markers that I embodied as a researcher, as noted in Table 1 below. In many respects, I position myself as an *insider* because: I am a Ghanaian citizen, currently possessing permanent resident status in the USA, and temporary resident status in the UK. I am familiar with the geographical terrain as well as the social and cultural norms of Ghana. I am aware of most of the explicit and tacit cultural rules that underpin Ghanaian social interactions and relationships (Spradley, 1979:45). I lived in the Ashanti Region (specifically in Kumasi) during my childhood and youth. Moreover, prior to commencing data collection I lived in south-east London and thus had some initial knowledge of the research setting in addition having some family and friends in this location who informed the research priorities some extent. Moreover, the research aimed not only to engage children of 16 years and below, but also other young people including young adults who are my peers. In general, I associated with research subjects in terms of nationality, age, language (both English and/or Twi<sup>13</sup>), ethnicity and race and to some extent transnational migration practices, given that I maintain transnational ties with my kin and non-kin relations back in Ghana. Hence, I inferred from these social markers to position myself as an insider though I was also aware I possessed some outsider markers.

Scholars suggest that characteristics of familiarity and relatedness in the research setting and with the researched can be advantageous (Mack *et al.*, 2005; Christensen and James, 2008; Ireland *et al.*, 2009: 2009:40-49, 108, 110-11; O’Reilly, 2009; Carling, Erdal and Ezzati, 2013). In the context of this research, familiarity with Ghanaian culture meant there was no need to depend on intermediaries for communication purposes. This enabled me to delve immediately into data generation and ‘concentrating on the research question itself’ rather than spending excessive familiarisation time with the wider research setting (Mack *et al.*, 2005:14). Additionally, knowledge of the target research population allowed for expediency in identifying potential informants, facilitate recruitment of respondents, and

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<sup>13</sup> One of the major Akan languages spoken widely by most Ghanaians.

building rapport, as noted earlier (Spradley, 1979:46). Lastly, my Ghanaian cultural background was useful in the analysis and interpretation of views and behaviours (Holmes, 1998:10).

Bearing in mind the benefits of having insider status, the research experience also pointed to the negative implication of sameness with research informants. Sometimes there was the assumption that I already knew certain things and did not need to be told. For instance, one young participant, Yaa (Female, 20-24 years, National Service Personnel, Kumasi) remarked:

*for this abi you know dada (for this one you know already). you should know this...I don't have to tell you everything... you are a Ghanaian*

Thus, in the midst of daily research encounters, I kept an inquisitive mind and used various conversation techniques including probing deeper into meaningful questions or issues to emphasize my 'learner' status (Spradley, 1979:26-27) and to avoid further simplistic assumptions regarding familiarity with some ideas, norms or practices (Spradley, 1979: 27,49-65; Colic-Peisker, 2004; Maydell, 2010 ).

**Table 2: Rethinking outsider and insider binary: social markers that may influence positionality and narrative interviews**

Markers*	Obvious to research participants	Not obvious to research participants	Reflexivity: could be selectively communicated
Name	✓		
Age		✓	✓
Gender	✓		
Education		✓	✓
Career and employment experience	✓	✓	✓
Cultural/Language competence	✓	✓	✓
Marital status	✓	✓	✓
Religion	✓	✓	✓
Physical appearance (e.g. complexion, dressing)	✓		
Ethnic origin (being Ashanti) /nationality	✓	✓	✓
Economic status (sometimes based on materials resources)	✓	✓	✓
Migration experience	✓	✓	✓

\* Not exhaustive. Source: Author (2019).

Having noted my social markers and its implications on the research process, my time in Ghana made me realise that certain people did not consider me as a complete insider. The relations of the interviewees and my family and friends often subjectively interpreted and categorised me more or less as a partial insider. As observed in Table 2 above, the factors include:

1. Physical and cultural characteristics: Most Ashanti's are darker in complexion than I do; having a lighter skin was enough reason for the respondents to classify me as a non-Ashanti. However, most people believe that when one travels *outside* Ghana, even if you do not come back *home* with wealth, then at least you should have a smooth, light skin because of the less sunny weather in other countries. In addition, the slight change in my English-speaking accent with certain American or British intonations leads both children and adults in Ghana to sometimes refer to me as someone who comes from 'outside' or 'from uptown', as Yaw noted when members of his community asked how he knew me. Similarly, while in London, I was interacting with Kwaku (Male, 36+

years, Security guard, London), when Regina (7 years of age), asked: ‘who is this man? ...Is he Ghanaian?’ Her father replied, ‘Yes he is Ghanaian’, and Regina asked: ‘Why is he not speaking Twi?’

2. Daily life experiences: Personally, while undertaking the data collection in Ghana, I felt my incomplete insider status was affirmed by my regular commentary on the high cost of living (e.g. food, internet and transport cost) in Ghana, and the poor service provision (e.g. poor internet connection, erratic electricity supply), which I did often compare to *aburokyire*, translated as ‘abroad’. While I complained, the respondents often would suggest that they are ‘okay’ or ‘managing’ to indicate their *insider* experience of coping with constraints, as discussed in Chapter 5. I assumed this reinforced and confirmed why certain people in Ghana subjectively placed me in the outsider category;
3. Material resources: The culture of migration in Ghana suggests that people, who return from *aburokyire*, or ‘outside’, are wealthy. Thus, children in poor families in Ghana, for instance, felt I was a wealthy migrant who could save their economic situation with material resources. For instance, Millicent, a 5-9 year-old girl, and her mother asked me to send them money and a laptop upon my return to London.
4. Children, girls and women’s spaces: On occasions when I visited certain schools with some of my informants, I was introduced to children as an *ɔhɔhoɔ* (stranger or outsider) by their adult gatekeepers. Additionally, when I entered women and children’s spaces, such as the water pump area to fetch water for a house with female respondents, it was assumed that I was an outsider with an interest in learning how to fetch water, and therefore was not to be laughed at by other men for performing a woman’s role. Thus, the outsider status allowed me access into female constructed spaces.

While considering all the above subjective factors that contribute to the positioning of a researcher by respondents, my Ghanaian cultural identity has not vanished as I was evidentially able to navigate my way geographically and understand matters culturally. Thus, with the duality of being a Ghanaian, yet viewed as a non-Ghanaian, or being viewed as a ‘fictive adult’, I was situated in the *hybrid insider-outsider* status as discussed in the work of Carling et al. (2013:16).

As far as neutrality, objectivity and impartiality are concerned, these are dominant issues in research methods and particularly in a qualitative study where the danger of fully identifying with the community exists due to prolonged interactions with research

participants. Positivist, or natural scientists, argue that the researcher should detach him or herself from research subjects to avoid influencing their actions and the research outcomes (Goode, 2006). However, I argue that while objectivity, impartiality and transparency are desirable in the research process, it is vital in a number of respects to understand through reflexivity. I was seen by my informants as ‘an integral part of the social world’ that is being studied, and thus ‘detachment in relation to data generation, analysis and interpretation are impossible’ (Horshburgh, 2003:2 cited in O’Reilly, 2009), especially given the interest in understanding the participant’s daily lives.

Bearing in mind the previous point, reflexivity is crucial in understanding the conditions under which research is carried out and written, and its effects (Nesbitt, 2000; Emond, 2005; O’Reilly, 2009). Reflexivity was maintained to keep a vivid account of the research process in my field notebook, including both positive and negative experiences, emerging ideas, the evolving nature of relationships with research subjects and any mistakes, misgivings, expectations and disappointments (Emerson, Fretz and Shaw, 1995). Moreover, at least twice in a week, I did not have research encounters with respondents in order to work exclusively on identifying emerging patterns while reflecting on my role within this process thereby keeping some sense of distance and objectivity.

Furthermore, reflexivity is essential because childhood teachings can promote power imbalances between adult researcher status and child informants. In particular, Ghanaian culture teaches children to be subservient as a way of showing respect (Twum-Danso 2009; Boakye-Boateng 2010). Similarly, cultural notions, such as *a child must be seen and not heard* and if a child spoke he or she must be speaking *something right*, are characteristic of institutionalised power dynamics between children and adults. However, in spending more time with young people and their parents, many young people felt at ease speaking with me and sometimes engaged me in various activities such as play, schoolwork and, housework. Additionally, it was emphasised that there are *no right/positive and wrong/negative answers* to avoid the tendency of *not speaking until I have the right answer*.

Moreover, scholars have suggested that assuming the ‘least-adult role’ or the ‘friend role’ (Holmes, 1998:17-19; Mandell, 1991 and Thorne, 1993 quoted in Mayall 2008:110) could be one way of addressing the effect of an adult status on research with children. To illustrate this, as familial relationships evolved, some children and parents began calling me ‘uncle’ as a sign of respect – though in some cases it signified a sense of obligation.

Furthermore, as noted earlier, power dynamics shifted when children had to teach me certain things like harvesting crops or fetching water. Naturally, it was easier to participate in the aspects of the respondent's daily activities which I was more familiar with, such as house chores and schoolwork, and also to engage in female defined roles as I was viewed as an outsider who was interested in learning. However, sometimes I was an 'outsider', with certain events, such as church services, where I could not dance to local Ghanaian Christian music.

With regards to my identity as a young man, there is the perception that a man of my age should be married or in a relationship with intentions of getting married. Thus, I noticed that as trusted relationships evolved, some of the respondents felt emboldened to ask about my marital status. Some women were even ready to arrange for me to meet a 'good woman' they had known for years that would make a suitable wife. While I did not follow up with marital relationship suggestions, those research encounters helped me to understand further constructions regarding *Obaapa* (good woman), as well as age-graded expectations of marriage and the cultural content of boys and girls socialisation into becoming *Obaapa* as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7.

Additionally, the research meetings with unmarried women also confirmed the importance of seeking informed consent from gatekeepers in order to avoid any negative perception of the researcher and the researched (Hammersley, 1997; Ireland et al., 2009:106). For instance, I was invited to a church by Geraldine (36+ years, Caregiver, London), a single mother of a child respondent, and whilst we were walking out of the church building, we met the head pastor. Geraldine had the dilemma of thinking that the pastor may feel that she is a 'sugar mummy' to me. However, I informed her that the pastor already knew that she was one of the research informants, and I had already sought permission from the pastor to interview some people in the church. Likewise, some of the married women solicited to be research subjects, stated that they needed to get their husband's approval. Unlike with men and husbands, this experience with women poignantly showed the hierarchical intricacies of accessing women in the research field.

### **Timetable for data collection**

*Woto wo bo ase dwa tetea a, wohu ne nson* – (Akan Proverb meaning: If you patiently dissect an ant, you see its intestines. With patience difficulties can be overcome)

This research is marked by three key phases: the first phase was executed in London between March and June 2016 and consisted of participant and non-participant observations and semi-structured in-depth interviews. The second phase involved visiting Ghana between July and October 2016 to interview relatives of the London-based respondents to understand their everyday lives. The third phase took place in New York, USA, between June and October 2017. Since returning to London, some additional research interactions with London respondents have also occurred.

In total, this ethnographic fieldwork took 13 months. As noted earlier, this relatively long period of field work was essential not only for collecting data but also the importance of building rapport and negotiating certain cultural values that were likely to serve as a barrier to participation. Additionally, it is important to note that within this relatively long period, *moving subjects* are likely to move from one location in response to economic constraints. For instance, after returning to London from Ghana, some of the London-based respondents had relocated to towns outside London due to their inability to cope with the rising cost of housing as discussed in Chapter 6.

## **Conclusion**

This Chapter has discussed the rationale for adopting ethnographic principles and the application of various qualitative data gathering techniques in soliciting children and other young people, as well as adults' perspectives. As noted, data elicitation methods were mainly informed by the benefits of ethnographic principles in research with children and transnational families (James and Prout, 1997). In brief, observation and prolonged interaction with research subjects were not only found to be useful for understanding everyday lives, but also in building trust and rapport, and breaking down cultural barriers in adult-child relationships. Moreover, while interviews are likely to reveal everyday lives and practices with both intra-and inter-generational perspectives, group discussions help in clarifying shared views amongst young people. Most of the elicitation activities, such as writing diaries and scrapbook tasks, served as entry access into children's world to ask more relevant questions.

Young people's opinions and their relational experiences are of central concern in this research. Consequently, interviewing their immediate relations allowed for triangulation of their views with relation to parents and carers. This approach raises methodological concerns regarding whether special research techniques for research design, methods, ethics,



participation and analysis are required separately for children and adults. Bearing in mind the views of other scholars, this research acknowledges that while children have different competence and abilities among themselves and in relation to adults, they are 'indistinguishable from adults' (James et al., 1998:31; Greene & Hill, 2005; Christensen & James, 2008). They are socially competent people (Alderson, 1995), and can be involved in interviews and other research-friendly activities, including drawing, painting, role-playing and writing (Boyden et al., 1997; James et al., 1998:188-89) and other activities that 'resonate with children's own concerns and routines' (Greene & Hill, 2005; Christensen & James, 2008:8), thereby empowering them with techniques that enable them to articulate their views. This may not be a sufficient argument, however, what is important in research with children in relation to a continuum of techniques is for the researcher to apply reflexivity in not only the research design, but, most importantly during the fieldwork, where a number of power-imbalances may emerge.

In addition to applying reflexivity in the choice of methods, thinking through an individual's involvement in the research process and relationships with research subjects (especially in highly hierarchal spaces or societies) is crucial. Moreover, while participatory research techniques and rapport building are essential in empowering children and also reducing the effect of power imbalances, it is also crucial that considerable attention is paid to cultural values and the ethos of various sites that have become useful in gathering data with children and young people. For instance, while school and the home served as an essential research site in understanding children's perspectives on their feelings towards constraints and opportunities with education and family situations, the hierarchical philosophy of most Ghanaian schools and intra-generational relations seemed to have a potential impact on children's expression. Similarly, in being under the control of adult gatekeepers (e.g. teachers and school prefects), adults and even older children may influence children's voluntary participation, which has some obvious ethical implications.

Consequently, understanding and incorporating relevant local cultural ethos can reduce structural-cultural obstacles (e.g. culture of silence) and harmonise both formal and informal ethical requirements of institutions and informal local communities (e.g. reciprocity) for participatory research. This is beyond the scope of this Chapter but worth discussing in future research to fully understand the relationship between the research agenda, ethics, and social change.

I also examined challenges faced in accessing the respondents at the initial stages of data collection, and the process of rapport building. This became much easier in Ghana where existing relationships occurred, in addition to transporting migrant resources (e.g. remittances). While reciprocity on the part of the researcher may not merely be accepted in terms of ethical research, it may serve to strengthen rapport and build relationships between the respondents and the researcher and providing further insights into transnational practices. Likewise, with respondents offering their time and energy to contribute to a research agenda, the question of how research serves as a means of social justice and change – including the expectation that the researcher takes direct action – may seem morally essential.

A number of factors and personal attributes, including gender, age social status, physical appearance, and culture, ethnicity and research orientation have been discussed in this methodology with consideration to insider and outsider status. As noted in this document some of the arguments made have tacitly or overtly been influenced by my Ghanaian socialisation and childhood experience in addition to my position as a transnational migrant. The benefits and limitations of my status have been considered. However, it was interesting to discover the research constructed *hybrid insider-outsider* status that emerged through inter-subjective interpretations informed by contextual, social, economic, migration, physical and cultural factors (Holmes, 1998:53-82; Connolly, 2008).

In the Chapters that follow, I draw on the findings and analysis of the multi-sited fieldwork data to discuss the factors affecting children and other young people's mobilities and migration aspirations in Ghana (Chapter 4); the local and transnational practices of children while 'doing family' and negotiating economic constraints (Chapter 5); the nexus between social reproduction and housing trajectories of children and young people (Chapter 6); and how young people leverage on social and cultural capital for opportunities and economic capital (Chapter 7).

## Chapter 4

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### **Im/mobility: Young Ghanaian's aspirations and ability to move elsewhere**

Migration scholars have long addressed the question: 'what are the drivers of migration?'. Regarding Ghana, scholarly work has increasingly revealed that apart from political and economic factors, migration is also socially and culturally embedded (Manuh, 2005; Coe, 2012). In particular, migration is recognised as an essential survival strategy and a means of economic and social advancement. Ghana has been a significant country of emigration in West Africa, where emigrating abroad has become 'one of society's cultural ideals' (Manuh 2005:7; Coe 2012). Ghanaians can be found in over 100 countries worldwide (Peil, 1995). Post-independence, the majority of Ghanaian migration flows were to Europe, at 37.7%, followed by the Americas at 23.6% (Quartey, 2009). Increasingly young Ghanaians are moving to other African countries and the Middle East (Peil, 1995; Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare, & Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000; Haar, 2005) with the hope of acquiring economic capital and social networks in preparation to migrate to more economically advanced countries. Emigration flows speak to Ghanaian cultural perceptions that movement is both normal and to be encouraged particularly in the pursuit of social and economic advancement. As a well-known Ghanaian proverb puts it, 'If a bird stays [on] one tree for too long, it can expect a stone to be thrown at it.' (Manuh 2005:7).

Although adult migration is important to households in Ghana, including the role of remittances on Ghana's economic development and household consumption, recent research has focused on understanding young people's agency as both 'left-behind children' (Mazzucato *et al.*, 2015) and mobile agents (Langevang and Gough, 2009). Migration research suggests that Ghanaian children and youth will either directly experience or be aware of the concept of migration as a means to a better life (Coe, 2012). For many young people, internal migration is an important first step in mobility trajectories, everyday life conditions, and their personal life-making processes; this will ultimately impact their families and shape their economic and social status (Langevang and Gough, 2009). Moreover, transnational migration analysis has addressed issues pertaining to families that are separated, but maintain ties across borders (Coe, 2011b; Mazzucato, 2015; Mazzucato *et al.*, 2015; Vanore, Mazzucato and Siegel, 2015).

Over the past few decades research on transnational family arrangements in Ghanaian migration has emerged in two ways: First, research focused on care and psychosocial impacts, which seem to pathologise children's migration experience (Mazzucato *et al.*, 2015; Vanore, Mazzucato and Siegel, 2015). Secondly, research on young people's agency within migration (Hashim, 2005; Langevang, 2008; Langevang & Gough, 2009). With the increased relevance of young people's agency in migration and the 'culture of migration', socio-cultural underpinnings could explain migration inflows and outflows. However, there seems to exist a contradiction between the socio-cultural norm of migration and the relatively small number of Ghanaians (about 250,623) living abroad, representing only one per cent of the country's population of 24,658,823 (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013).

With few exceptions (see Coe 2013), work that explores the political-economy of migration within the 'culture of migration' takes for granted that most people with migration aspirations will never actually migrate. As argued by Kalir (2012:314), in the era of transnational migration, there is the tendency to underestimate the nation-state's role in restricting migration Kalir (2012:314). Likewise, Katz also noted the state's role in selective migration processes that favours workers mobility but denies family members from joining workers overseas (Katz, 2001). While dominant policy discourse suggests copious amounts of people and remittances moving within migration corridors, particularly with metaphors such as 'flows, waves and streams', the reality is that there are many people who are unable to migrate in the era of globalisation, especially the low-income and poorly connected constituents of the transnational social field. Having said this, it is acknowledged that there are people who voluntarily choose not to migrate.

This Chapter investigates the migration processes at work in the social field and the consequent view of the 'culture of migration' in Ghana, which has surprisingly been understudied. One of the key arguments in transnational migration studies has been the need to move beyond the nation-state view of society as it underestimates the complexity of connectedness, the multi-sited and multi-layered nature of the transnational social field within which migrants and non-migrants are embedded (Basch, Schiller and Blanc, 1994; Schiller and Levitt, 2004: 1007–1009). It could be argued the complexities of the era of Ghanaian transnational migration need to be explained by understanding the challenges of those who are unable to move, as noted by Kalir (2012:314), and the process under which

young people do move. This Chapter does not give a comprehensive description of how Ghanaian migration come about, as this has already been addressed by scholars including Peil (1995), Awumbila *et al.*, (2008), Quartey (2009) and Coe (2011a).

Both migrants and non-migrants experience a number of cross-border political, social and economic processes, including media, employment, immigration law, childcare, remittances and governance. Migration is only one aspect of *processes* that households may experience. But as argued by Schiller and Levitt (2004:1028), people embedded in social fields may be involved in, ‘multiple transnational processes at the same time. The transnational identities and institutions that emerge in response to these other processes are not well understood’. They argue for a transnational approach that explores how transnational practices and economic, social and political processes are related to, and influence, each other in shaping social life.

In this chapter, I reveal the critical topographies of Ghanaian emigration. Historical account of parental migration is examined alongside children and other young people’s experiences of mobility and immobility. The unequal dimensions of ‘development’, social relations and other resources across space or places also draw attention to the implications of globalised capitalism on development and social reproduction processes.

Inspired by empirical evidence on young people’s agency in migration processes, as either left-behind, intending migrants or migrants themselves, and the theoretical work to explain how migration comes about (e.g. see Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2008; Castles et al., 2014; Carling & Schewel, 2017; Carling & Collins, 2018), this Chapter draws on interview data with children, young Ghanaian people themselves, their parents and extended family relations. The Chapter generally focuses on the process by which their mobility or immobility comes about, and the implications for the ‘culture of migration’ in an era of restrictive immigration policies which can be linked to the political-economic aspect of social reproduction. Firstly, this Chapter examines how views, experiences and practices are shaped by children’s position within the family and the child’s imagined life abroad. Secondly, the political, economic, social and cultural factors that create aspirations to migrate, and how young people prepare to migrate. While these are distinct factors, they are also congruent; each serves to reinforce young people’s motivation to move. Lastly, I argue the same factors that shape young people’s aspiration to move also serve as barriers to mobility. Consequently, only a small portion of young people are able to migrate, while

others stay behind. In the concluding section of this chapter, topographies of who moves as well as how immobility and mobility come about, draw attention to the need for a political response to addressing gender and class-based inequalities.

### **Family migration and children's mobilities**

Children of migrants and migrant children are embedded in the 'transnational social field' which is often co-constructed with experiences, practices, social relations and structures. For the children of migrants who participated in this research, their parent's internal (in Ghana) and transnational migration experience shaped children's experiences of growing up and childhood mobilities.

Earlier Ghanaian migration studies theorised that migrant parents move primarily for economic reasons, to find work or a 'better life', family reunification, and to escape political persecution. This unidirectional representation of movement from country A to B often ignores the complexities of migration, as well as the changing migration landscape that affects family migration. Several participants shared stories about the complexity of individual migration experiences. In London, Isaac's (a 12-year-old boy) father spoke of his experience shaped by economic and political forces and how his siblings supported his multiple movements:

*'I had finished secondary school with poor grades... I stayed home, and a family friend returned to Ghana from Germany and he promised to encourage my brothers to bring me overseas because I have become a big boy. I was 25 years by then. My siblings sent 1200 Deutschmarks and the connection man took 600 and helped me to get 'departure' and 'arrival' travel stamps of Togo and Nigeria to show that I am a businessman. When I came to the UK in 1988, I did not go back because I doubted if I will be given another entry. In 2002, I went to China as I had intentions of importing Agrochemicals from there for business in Ghana.'*

Isaac's father is one example of how families with a history of migration enable their members to have more options in migration. His story shows the complexity of migration where apart from the political-economic considerations, age carries significant weight. Being 25 years old, an age perceived by his family as an adult, or a 'big boy', enabled him to ask his siblings for help migrating, despite his poor academic history. As in anywhere

else, reaching the age of 25 demands independence in providing for one's own subsistence, especially for young men (i.e., food, clothing, shelter, etc.).

While coming of age is a consideration in the social organisation of who moves and how they receive social support, gender and status hierarchies are also important. In poor and large families in Ghana, it is expected that older children, especially boys, will migrate to reduce the amount of dependence on the limited resources at home.

Migration is not unidirectional but rather multi-directional as noted in the illustration of Kwaku (Security Guard in London, the father of two children, 10 year-old-boy and 7 year-old-girl):

*'I was schooling in Kumasi. I went to the village during a vacation to a farm, so that I can get some money to pay my fees at Kumasi Polytechnic. After graduation, I went to Nigeria to work and secured a connection to the UK. Sometimes when I tell my children about this experience, they do not believe how difficult it was in Ghana and coming here [UK].'*

The complexity movement, including poverty and economic deprivation that potential migrants faced in Ghana and the series of movement between places, seems to be fictitious to their children due to a generational difference in the experiences of constraints (Mannheim, 1952). The importance of responding to opportunities as they arise is evident. Internal migration often preceded emigration out of Ghana.

UK-born Ghanaian descent children often visited Ghana, returning to the UK and the USA with Ghanaian cultural artefacts. These things were supposed to facilitate children's acquisition of local knowledge. The popular artefacts found in the living rooms of research respondents in the UK and USA included Asante adinkra symbol, *Sankɔfa* [return and get it] emphasising the importance of learning from the past and *Gye Nyame* [except for God] a symbol about the supremacy of God (See Figure 2: Picture of a clock taken by author in the living room of one of the households). In fact, most transnational children often used the word *Sankɔfa*, in their narratives regarding the return migration intentions. Parents equally expected that children's local knowledge in this context would contribute to inter-personal Twi communication skills, including speaking to other Ghanaian adults, children's identity formation and their sense of belonging as Ghanaian.



Figure 2: Gye Nyame Symbol used in a wall clock design

Children in Ghana saw changes in their material resources due to a parent's absence and the receipt remittances. A perceptible shift occurs from a state of scarcity before a parent's migration to improved economic conditions once a parent secures work and begins sending remittances to Ghana (Punch, 2007a). This was clear in Hilda's (Female, 20-24 years, Kumasi-Accra, part-time employed and student) experience:

*'Mum travelled when I was around 10 years, she wanted to go and work to give us a better life. When she was going, my brother and I, we didn't know, our grandma informed us a week after she left that our mum is gone abroad. We used to be with our grandma in the village, but she moved us to Kofofidua, and later to Accra for us to attend the best schools.'*

Hilda's experience suggests that parental migration may result in multiple internal migrations within Ghana for the left-behind children. This movement is likely facilitated by the migrant parent's ability to send remittances to children for accessing resources in Ghana, such as food, education or healthcare, more readily available in the city (Sasin & McKenzie,



2007; Coe, 2011b; Owusu, 2013). Consequently, these children grow up having an understanding of a world where movement may be necessary to access better opportunities.

Children were not entirely worried about being uninformed about their parent's migration intentions. Instead, as they grew up as youth, they became concerned about the long-term physical absence of parents, especially when parents failed to return to Ghana at least once in a year. Moreover, young people with migrant parents worry emotionally about their parent's physical absence at specified occasions. For instance, there is the feeling of sadness on events like Mother's Day or Father's Day when their parents were not present to celebrate together physically. Moreover, young people resident in boarding school houses reported a difference in experiences. While none-migrant students had frequent visits from their parents and access to home-made food from parents, children with migrant parents often experienced little or no family visits during school terms. However, children who stayed behind also viewed their parent's migration as a means of having their economic and educational needs met, particularly given that they received relatively adequate money and other educational materials from overseas.

Interactions with children in Ghana confirmed some children were living in a state of *migrancy* at childhood in two respects: On the one hand, there were children who moved both internally within Ghana or had lived out their childhood with parents overseas. Thus, unlike Coe (2012) findings, where some left-behind children of Ghanaian immigrants imagined their mobility after schooling in Ghana, the children in this study were not expecting to live out their childhood in Ghana without their parents. On the other hand, there were children who stayed behind during parental migration with the constant *hope* of migrating later, child respondents were not just in migrancy but also in a state of waiting, given that their parents often told them to 'wait' when they expressed the emotional impact of the separation. '[M]igrancy has become as important as a social category as those classics of the modern era: gender, social class, 'race' and nationality' (Näre, 2013:605). As one boy, Nana Sarpong (10-19, Kumasi) noted: 'My father always tells me to wait, when I finish school here then I will get a scholarship and come over'. 'Increasing numbers and proportions of the world's children are growing up in this space [of migrancy], even when they are not migrants, but because their parents or even grandparents once were' (Seeberg & Goździak, 2016:8). The political and economic reasons that result in young people's involuntary waiting or immobility will be discussed later in this Chapter.

Moreover, UK-based children's return mobilities emerged as a practice that enabled migrant parents to cope with childcare responsibilities. In London, due to increasing work demands, amid the rising cost of living, especially housing costs, parents were compelled to relocate outside the city. Parents also sent children to Ghana due to cultural political-economic constraints that impacted care as discussed in Chapter 5.

While children may experience multiple forms of social, geographical or economic mobilities, it was noted as they transitioned from childhood to youth, they negotiated their independence in relation to where and whom to travel to. Thus, as transnational children instead of yearly family visits to Ghana, they grew up choosing to visit other countries, thus expanding their transnational space to other countries beyond Ghana and building a multinational space. For instance, as Rosemary (female, 25–35 years, London) noted:

*'When I was very young, I travelled to Ghana with my parents, and you had to follow them everywhere to visit relations even when you did not like to go to those family relations. Now I feel independent, I work, have my money and I visit places I like. Last month I was in Morocco.'*

The experience shared by Rosemary echoes the context of family migration where children's choices are likely to be thin (Punch, 2007c; Tyrrell, 2011). While child research participants experienced thin agency in their negotiations with adults, their autonomy in personal decisions was obvious in youth and young adult life, especially when they had some economic power based on a transition from dependency to independence resulting from exiting school and entering the workforce.

Most of these agential restrictions are culturally embedded (Twum-Danso, 2008; 2009; Coe, 2011a) and operate at diverse levels of children's lives at local or international migration instances. For instance, with respect to children and other young people's internal migration in Ghana, internal mobilities and migration was not considered to be a bad thing given that children gained resources, improved social status, and were considered as a 'good child' because of their economic role in household livelihoods (for instance providing money for younger siblings). However, in the context of international mobility, a household intra-generational contract persisted. Young adults living in the parental home were expected to respect a parent's decision regarding whether to move or not. Thus, going against a parent's decision often resulted in family tensions with the young person being

labelled as a ‘stubborn.’ For instance, Rosemary’s father mentioned that ‘he realised that his child [Rosemary] had travelled to Morocco without informing him when she was living under his roof... she has become very stubborn’ (Field notebook, 2016). Here it was discovered that living in parental accommodations due to lack of ability to afford personal accommodations was significant to the construction of the child. Moreover, gender differences were important in understanding who is encouraged or restricted with movement. Young women continued to stay with their parents due to cultural norms that encourage the woman to stay until marriage. However, young women’s stay with parents was partly because unlike males, they either did support domestic work not just out of necessity but because traditionally they were expected to do so. Accordingly, where young people decided to exercise their agency there were tensions between parents and young people. Principally, unequal treatment emerged along with both intragenerational and inter-generational relationship as they pertained to age, income and gender relations such that boys and girls mobilities within the household were treated differently.

### **Children and parental migration decision-making**

Regarding parental migration decision-making, while children’s choices, constraints, and future aspirations may generally influence parental migration motives (Orellana et al., 2001; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2011b; Tyrrell, 2011), children in this study– especially left-behind children in Ghana – were not necessarily involved in parental migration decision-making or the process that came with moving. Rather their participation in decision-making was often constrained. According to Tyrrell (2011), age remains a major indicator of child involvement in an adult’s decision-making – older children are allowed more input in decision making as compared to younger children, due to their natural competency. The quotes below illustrate the experiences of two youth who were between the ages of 7 and 10 when their mothers migrated in the 2000s:

*‘My brother and I didn’t know. Our grandma informed us a week later that our mum is gone abroad’* (John, male, 20-24 years, Accra).

*‘Even though she was telling me that she will be travelling to join my dad, I was not part of any decision-making process as to whether she should go or not. She was always telling us to take care of ourselves’* (Grace, female, 20-24 years, Kumasi).

Among Ghanaian households, trust and confidentiality with pre-migration information are significant within the social field. These principles determine who gets information about an intending migrant. Children are regarded as highly emotional, and it is believed that children will be sorrowful or share migration plans with friends or family when their parents wished for discretion. Beyond age considerations, another major reason children and certain adults are kept in the dark, is because of the belief that evil forces [beyie] may thwart the migration process at any given time. One parent in London, who left behind his child with the child unaware of his migration plans, mentioned that:

*'Back home in Ghana there is a belief that the more people know about your travel you may have bad luck with being denied entry. A friend of mine went to see our friend off in Accra. But when he got to Kumasi, Eric, the traveller who was expected to be in Canada after 2 days, was already in Kumasi. Eric had been deported. When you are travelling you don't tell people - if it's successful people will know, if it's not, then no one knows about your bad experience. If it is unsuccessful, you just tell people "only went to Accra and I am back", nothing like "I have been deported".'*

This perspective not only underscores the significance of circumspection with migration information but, more importantly, an attempt to avoid the shame that may come with the status of 'deportee' or 'unsuccessful migrant' and the potential social impact on children and family by association.

*Children's imaginings of Aburokyire, or 'elsewhere places': How are they constructed?*

During interactions with children in Ghana, the word *Aburokyire*, translated as 'abroad', was commonly used. *Aburokyire* meant places outside Ghana. However, it was not just any place outside Ghana but rather places where better conditions existed. These included easy access to transport, better and free education, reliable electricity, clean environment, huge infrastructure including skyscrapers, no corporal punishment, advanced technology, green-grassed playgrounds, cool weather, and abundant and cheap food. In this context, most of them referred to places such as London, Germany, America, South Africa, the Philippines, Israel, China, Italy, Mexico, and India. Another commonality the children referenced is travelling on an aeroplane to get to *Aburokyire*. It must also be noted that the youth did not consider lower-income countries with similar development challenges to

Ghana as *Aburokyire*. In other words, they constructed a hierarchical order of countries, and as such, they considered *Aburokyire* based on development status indicators such as wealth and access to basic needs in everyday life.

Child respondent's knowledge of the countries mentioned above was shaped by various factors. While some of their descriptions of *Aburokyire* included reference to some of the toys they had at home, such as a London Bridge souvenir, their association of *Aburokyire* with wealth and abundance was also informed by media representations of places, such as shops or restaurants, often shared by their migrant parents, siblings or friends on social media platforms. Moreover, consumption of media programmes, including American reality shows and Mexican, Indian or Filipino telenovelas, was central to how they imagined, created and performed migration manifested among their peers as subjects who know about *Aburokyire* (Langevang, 2008). Additionally, some children found other technologies useful in their construction of life elsewhere. For instance, in trying to understand how Ama Duku (female, 10-19 years, Kumasi) knew about London she responded, 'I used Google'.

For older children of migrants in Ghana, abroad was conceived as a better place not only because of what they had learned from school or popular media, but also how they felt development and governance challenges, such as corruption and the rising cost of living, would affect their access to better educational and employment in Ghana. Mary a 24-year-old girl in Ghana, with her parents living in London, noted that:

*'I don't like anything about Ghana. I don't like the fact that you're not paid well. Transport is also expensive and the fact that things are expensive like food and clothes. Water and electricity bills are expensive as well. Getting opportunities here is slim and the system is also bad and poor since the economy is bad when you're given money it doesn't last. I just hope I can find a job outside.'*

In the above statement, it can equally be said that *Aburokyire* among older children of migrants is perceived as a place for better working conditions and therefore linked to labour migration (Coe, 2012).

Unlike the Ghana-based children, who identified wealth and development as the basis for their selection, for the UK-based children in this study, peace and stability were

important in shaping their country preference. Several child participants confirmed that they will not visit the USA and Paris due to repeated gun violence and the 2016 terrorist attacks in the respective countries. For instance, a 12 year-old-girl in London noted:

*'Now with America, I feel it's kind of dangerous because they sell guns there and you get some crazy people around the world who want to kill innocent people...I am going to get killed if I go there. Some places I just feel I don't want to go there now like Paris because of the terrorist attacks. I watched it on the news. Mummy told me that we may go to Paris, but I told her no.'*

The imagined movements of children were also constructed alongside actual short-term movements and long-term stays, depending on whether they were located in Ghana or Aburokyire. While most UK-based children went to Ghana and other countries for short-period stays, including holiday visits to extended family relations and tourism, which often would last less than two weeks, those in Ghana desired to move to the UK for long-term stays of more than a year under family reunification, education and work arrangements. Equally important is how children's mobilities were contrasted across a continuum of dependence and independence with respect to their transition from school to work, as noted in the perspectives shared below:

*'When I start working at twenty-something I'll go to Ghana for a week because most of the time I'll be at college or work and I will not be given a break for a long period'* (boy, 13 years, London).

*'I am trying to save money to go to Dubai. It's a nice country. I look at the pictures on the internet. It's cheaper going there than Ghana, about 489 pounds. I'll like to go there next year and Canada as well to visit my aunt'* (girl, 19 years, London).

*'I didn't really want to go to Ghana at first because it's too hot; I can't take the heat and the dumsor [electricity power outage] for a long period. What made me happy going there was meeting family and friends'* (boy, 13 years, New York).

The views above illustrate the possibility of increased mobility as children grow along critical life junctures, such as securing an income-earning job. In effect, employment

and the nature of their work is likely to affect their travel to Ghana and other places. Likewise, it is worth mentioning that Ghana is not constructed as a place of return for work, rather as a place of leisure, while the UK remains a place of work. Additionally, for some other children, Ghana was constructed as a place of discipline. Given that they did not want to experience any form of corporal punishment in Ghana, they expressed their disinterest in moving there while young; rather they preferred travelling to Ghana when they are older or autonomous. Primarily, children's everyday life and their interpersonal relationships with adults were critical to their socialisation into whether to migrate in the short-term or later in their life.

In the next section, I will focus on the structural issues, including both political and social factors that influence migration processes within the social field.

### **Contemporary migration and explanations of drivers and structural constraints to the culture of migration**

As noted above, children are socialised about migration, and they have individual migration aspirations or imaginations about life elsewhere. However, despite children's migration aspirations, or a collective effort by household members to enable a child to move from Ghana to abroad, some children whose parents migrated for work in other countries had their personal migration delayed or were still negotiating the migration environment.

The young people's personal and collective family migration aspirations were constrained by restrictive nation-state migration agendas, mostly by Western developed countries. This includes the UK's self-created 'hostile environment' (Mulvey, 2010; Bowling & Westenra, 2018), emerging immigration reforms that puts America and American workers first (Wells, 2017; Wilson, 2017), and existing US immigration policies that admit migrant workers while preventing their significant others from joining them in the short-term (Katz, 2001). Various events are underway, including an attempt to gain immigration 'control' through the creation of a 'hostile environment' pre and post-Brexit, as well as President Trump's aim to halve legal immigration to the US within a decade (White House, 2017). Most of these restrictive policies seem to be part of Western government's attempt at blaming migration and immigrants for the 2007-8 global financial crisis, unemployment, austerity and economic growth slowdown. Clearly restrictive migration directives and policies have affected children and youth within global households.

Data from the Ghana Living Standards Survey (GLSS) suggests that 48.6% of the population of 24,658,823 migrated internally (GSS, 2013; Ghana Statistical Service, 2014). However, with respect to international migration, the 2010 Ghana Population and Housing Census report (Ghana Statistical Service, 2013) indicated that 250,623 Ghanaians live abroad, representing 1% of the country's population. The relatively small proportion of Ghanaian emigrants begs questions about the 'culture of migration' (Anarfi *et al.*, 2003; Coe, 2013) and why less than 2 per cent of the country's population accounted for international migrants. Additionally, despite the availability of national emigration estimates, children and youth are invisible in the data (White *et al.*, 2011). Perhaps this is due to the adultist construction of migration projects and census data.

In addition, until recently when scholars employed everyday mobilities and social navigation to explain the reasons why young people move (Langevang and Gough, 2009; Veale and Dona, 2014), Ghanaian migration literature has often employed traditional migration theories. While this research is plausible to understand the 'push and pull' (Anarfi, Awusabo-Asare and Nsowah-Nuamah, 2000; Quartey, 2009) factors of Ghanaian emigration, it is worth mentioning that the 'aspiration/ability' model (Carling & Schewel, 2017; Carling & Collins, 2018) can offer some explanations on the size and direction of Ghanaian youth migration internationally. This model is relevant because it considers the reality of contemporary migration regimes – restrictive immigration policies – as well as certain barriers in the migration process within the emigration environment. The model is based on the premise that intending migrants may first have a *wish* to move, but that wish needs to be realised through various efforts or may be blocked by certain barriers. Thus, the model's major strength is to help explain the reasons why certain Ghanaians are unable to migrate – and to a larger extent where they wish to move to.

#### *Economic transformations and mobile citizens?*

Ghanaian youth constitute a generation under neo-liberal economic reforms and political liberalisation. Nearly six decades after political independence, Ghana has experienced periods of both major economic decline and growth, as well as political instability and growing democracy. Faced with the stark economic crisis in the 1980s, Ghana adopted a number of economic reforms and trade liberalisations to restore growth (Ansell, 2005). In 2011, Ghana joined the league of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), allowing for debt cancellation under the International Monetary Fund and World



Bank regulations (World Bank, 2004). In 2019, Ghana was acclaimed as the fastest growing economy, with a growth forecast of 8.8% (International Monetary Fund, 2019). Prior to this forecast, Ghana's economy grew 5-6% in the last decade and achieved a Middle-Income Country (MIC) status in 2010. However, despite economic growth and liberalisation, under the mantra of the 'private sector as the engine of growth' and employment creation, economic growth indicators have not kept up with population growth. Consequently, graduate unemployment remains a critical challenge for young people and the government. In fact, while carrying out data collection in 2016, Ghana was under an IMF/World Bank loan facility regulation that involved huge public sector retrenchment. The government was no longer employing university graduates. Consequently, some of the youth respondents in this study were unemployed: As John (male, 20-24 years, Accra) noted:

*'I completed school and after national service, I have been looking for work. But I went there the last time to my former place of work and this is what I saw at the door [see Figure 3 below]; they are no longer hiring; it's all over the place... you finish school and there is no job...besides transport cost and living expenses is high... how do you go for a job when you spent all your money on transport, or you do not have any to attend another interview?'*



Figure 3: Employment embargo notice (picture taken by respondent and used with permission)

The above experience illustrates that even amid economic growth, young people's mobility is constrained due to recurring challenges of surviving or 'managing' everyday costs of food, housing, transportation (Langevang, 2008). Thus, young people with little to

no money are likely to be disadvantaged in their mobility-for-job search in the said growing economy (Ansell, 2005; Langevang and Gough, 2009).

Additionally, a key attribute of employment that affects university-educated youth is the accessibility to jobs being dependent on location, availability, and affordable transportation. In rural communities, young people may have to travel longer distances to get to work. The situation is more acute for youth who want jobs that tend to be concentrated in major urban centres like Kumasi and Accra, where already there are difficulties in employment and social navigation. As Baaba (female, 25-35 years, Bank Accountant, Kumasi) noted:

*‘Some of the companies here [Kumasi] when you submit your application letters, they will ask you to take it to their headquarters in Accra, so the best way to submit is to take it to Accra in person. However, you get to Accra; it’s chaotic, as it’s not the same transport terrain as Kumasi.’*

### **Young people as producers and consumers of globalisation**

Beyond internal migration dynamics, migration and globalisation are closely related. Today, children and youth are more connected and integrated with increasingly global flows of ideas, worldviews, cultural practices, remittances, and goods and products (Schiller & Levitt, 2004:1007–1009). Children’s everyday life activities reveal that they are embedded in transnational social fields, either because they are involved in multidirectional movements between countries, or they are left-behind with contact to relations and material resources. This shapes their awareness of the world around them. In particular, young people who were either working or dependent on remittances from *Aburokyire* were equally consumers and buyers of global goods, such as cell phones, toys or clothes as noted in the quotes below:

*‘When you get fresh goods, including footwear, clothes, toys, and they realise the items are not from Ghana... all eyes will be on you...your friends tend to follow you more so they can also get some’* (Kevin, male, 20-24 years, High school graduate, Kumasi/Accra).

*‘I used to watch Greetings from Abroad show on TV and seeing all those Ghanaians made me realise life is good out there’* (Grace, female, 20-24 years, Nurse, Kumasi).

While young people are consumers in global flows of materials and resources, the perspective shared below also shows clearly that they are producers of migration information and practices that deepen expectations and aspirations around migration as noted below:

*'A lot of the times you get nice clothes and shoes out there and you feel you want your friends in Ghana to see how you look or feel so you take a picture and you put it on Facebook and by the time you get back to Ghana they will all be calling you Bɔga<sup>14</sup>. Some they will come and ask you how they can also travel like you did'* (Linda, female, 25-35 years, Nurse, London).

With these experiences above, it can be said that young people engaged with migration processes are either migrants themselves or the recipients of migrant resources. Young migrants may serve as promoters of global cultures and equally represent some of the symbolic images of success when one migrates, thereby serving as agents who reproduce the culture of migration to others, especially their peers.

### **Education, modernity, failure of the promise of education and the longing for distant places**

In international development discourse, the poor are often promised that they can *get ahead* through education. Most adults, including parents and policymakers, talk about education from a relational improvement standpoint to suggest that through education youth can improve their standard of living from their parents. Consequently, youth are encouraged that if they progress successfully through education, the situation of their families and future kin will be improved. Ultimately, through education, society can achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 4) to '[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all' and its corresponding target of 'leaving no one behind' (United Nations, 2018). Furthermore, policy discourse across many African countries suggests that investing in human capital targeting young people can contribute

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<sup>14</sup> A name used for a Ghanaian living abroad who has returned to Ghana. It is a social recognition that also symbolically represents people who have accumulated wealth or material resources from overseas. The name has its origins from the word Hamburger after many Ghanaians went to Hamburg, Germany in the 1980s with majority of them returning with material resources such as clothing and cars.

demographic dividends and ultimately ensure a country's economic competitiveness in knowledge economies (African Union, 2015).

Expanding education to people who were previously excluded from schooling has been a government priority since Ghana's independence.<sup>15</sup> Historically, young people migrated internally to access work and education (Hashim, 2005). However, fieldwork interviews in Ghana revealed that most young people in urban centres have aspirations of moving from Kumasi and Accra to gain education abroad. While migration for education is not new in Ghana, the practice of upper-classes who invested in their children's education abroad has spread among low and (aspiring) Ghanaian middle-classes. Preference is given to studying abroad because a degree from abroad is linked to better-paying and formal jobs, in addition to the fact that most young people believe the Ghanaian education system is highly theoretical with little to no focus on knowledge application.

For recent graduates with at least a bachelor's degree, they aspire for jobs and lifestyles that match their qualification. However, most career options are only available in major cities like Accra and Kumasi. Thus, they see the need to move to the city. Unsurprisingly, these young people noted their desire to move overseas either began, or was heightened, while in Accra or Kumasi, as noted by John (20-24 years, Accra), 'after coming to the city, expectations and dreams of people grow...all my friends whom I graduated with have intentions of going to further their education abroad'. For John, his uncle who lives in London encouraged him to pursue a master's degree overseas, given that he has been unemployed since graduating with a bachelor's degree. This nexus between internal and international migration confirms a pattern within the Ghanaian culture of migration which is shared in the migration literature on how internal migration can contribute to international migration (de Haas, 2008; Castles et al., 2014).

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<sup>15</sup> Since independence in 1957, education has been a top priority for successive governments in Ghana. Kwame Nkrumah introduced free education under the 1961 Education Act to promote human capital development and national self-reliance. In 1996, President Rawlings introduced the Free Compulsory Basic Education (FCUBE) programme, providing free primary education and materials (e.g. text and exercise books) for every school-going Ghanaian child. Subsequently, in 2006 President Kuffour's government introduced the school feeding programme for public elementary schools in addition to supplying school uniforms and transportation. In 2017, Free Senior High School was introduced by President Nana Akufo-Addo's administration. Primarily, these programmes aimed at improving learning quality, school enrollment, attendance, and retention in addition to responding to regional and international development agenda such as the African Union Agenda 2063 which has a focus on education and young people's aspirations, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (2000-2015) on extreme poverty, hunger and education, and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on Quality Education (2015-2030).

As noted earlier, the hopes of young people *getting ahead* through work after school are misplaced. In particular, public sector jobs are were unavailable, as noted earlier. Consequently, unemployment and underemployment among the educated, particularly those who are unable to move, is prominent. Some young people find alternative jobs in the informal sector, for instance, graduates who undertake shoe shining or sell roasted plantain in a suit and tie in cities like Accra. Some young people in this study also combined further education in new areas with on-demand taxi driving at night.

*The unbearable conditions of living in the city: 'Things are not easy here'*

Day-to-day realities in Accra and Kumasi, the two major cities in Ghana with middle-class lifestyles, also nurture a desire to move. These two major cities have undergone rapid urbanisation, but without corresponding urban planning strategies.

Everyday conditions in the city were central in respondent's narratives. They criticised the government for unreliable electricity and water supply. Traffic jams made mobility challenging. On the one hand, a number of flashy private vehicles, sometimes with stickers: 'Proud US Navy Brother' or foreign university alumni logos, were common. Private vehicles, in addition to 'nice and big buildings', as Julius (male, 25-35 years, graduate student, Kumasi) noted, are a symbolic representation of 'successful returnees or families with successful relations overseas.' They therefore suggested and socialised young people into moving elsewhere in order to secure similar materials resources. On the other hand, increased private cars usage often cause heavy congestion due to poor urban planning, including a lack of road expansion to respond to increased road usage. Road usage has equally increased due to population growth driven by rural-urban migration as well as international immigrants who come to Accra and Kumasi for business. In describing the poor conditions Hilda (female, 20-24 years, part-time worker and student, Accra) noted:

*'You see, electricity has gone off right now, although it is a holiday; without electricity, you cannot do anything, and you just have to go and sleep.'*

She also noted the mismanagement water and electricity supply as well as the widespread corruption by the educated class. She expressed her annoyance by saying: 'Ghanaians are not serious. Things are not easy here. There is no future here!'

To return to an earlier point, the steady economic growth of approximately 5% over the past decade and the growth of the middle-class, making up about 9–10% of the

population, seem to be paired with a decline in living conditions for the poor. In particular, a thriving real estate market exists with old buildings being replaced by ultra-modern complexes and multinational shopping malls. Young people try to keep up with a modern lifestyle, with their family and peers occasionally going to these complexes for leisure, including dates or life celebrations. However, the growing middle-class life has contributed to the rise in housing costs, with high rents and approximately 2 years of advance rent payment required before securing accommodation in Kumasi and Accra.

It must also be noted that the overall sense of economic insecurity in Ghana is influenced by the desire to move elsewhere. Young men and fathers expressed higher insecurity due to lack of money and constructions about masculinity including expectations of being the male breadwinner that they felt unable to fulfil.

Despite the compelling reasons that underscore young people's migration motives and aspirations, the question arises as to why there are few young migrants, especially considering Ghana's youthful demographic profile and the 48% youth unemployment rate. In the next section, it will be argued that restrictive policies of contemporary migration regimes disproportionately and negatively affect young people's *desire* to move. Similarly, it will be suggested that the Ghanaian migration environment does not empower young people to move despite their *wishes*.

### **The immigration interface and young people's aspirations versus ability to move**

Today, a young person aspiring to move from Ghana to access opportunities elsewhere has to overcome a number of obstacles, cost and barriers internally, including those created by an inadequate emigration service, as well as those formulated by destination countries. For example, most adult respondents reported that up until the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968,<sup>16</sup> Ghanaians could come to the UK without the need for a visa.

The immigration interface is evident at various levels of society and the nation-state. First, young people are faced with restrictive immigration policies and practices that attempt to define who deserves to move (Schiller & Levitt, 2004). In January 2019, the United States Department of Homeland Security announced visa sanctions on Ghana for what the US government described as Ghana not cooperating on accepting 'removed' Ghanaian nationals

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<sup>16</sup> The Act prevented citizens of the UK former colonies from any right of entry which they benefited from before the Act.

from the US (Department of Homeland Security, 2019). Consequently, the validity period and the number of entries on new tourist and business visas (B1, B2, and B1/B2) is limited to one-month, single-entry visas for potential migrants (U.S. Embassy in Ghana, 2019). Prior to this recent sanction most university students travelled to the US and the UK on short-term holiday-worker programmes to earn income to support their personal education and consumption needs. However, this visa programme was cancelled in 2012. The cancellation of the holiday-worker programme affected the legal options for youth migration. Additionally, visa regimes treat young people differently; they are characterised as high-risk persons, unlikely to return if given a visa. Moreover, media representations often portray young people as active movers, sometimes taking irregular channels. As Osei (male, 20-24 years, Apprentice, Kumasi) noted:

*'They will usually refuse you a visa because you have less ties to Ghana in terms of having a job, assets like a house, or married with children in Ghana. The question is how do you marry or acquire an asset when you don't have an income?'*

The account above suggests that migration is preserved for the wealthy, working and married adults, in other words, achievements of 'adulthood'. Thus, young people who have not met these achievements are seen as persons 'becoming', unsettled and developing, with a tendency to make irresponsible decisions, such as overstaying their visa (Qvortrup 1994:2; Holloway & Valentine 2000:5). These youth should therefore be restricted.

Similarly, family reunification laws in the UK that require proof of income of at least £18,600 by a British/settled person sponsoring the migration of a non-European has impacted family reunification intentions of Ghana-based children with parents living in the UK (Gower, 2015). Most children respondents, like Mercy (female, 10-19 years, high school student, Kumasi), had parent's living on low-pay and insecure jobs. The monetisation of family reunification has consequently affected Mercy and other children by delaying their mobility. To a large extent, unless their parent's job situation changes, they are likely to stay in Ghana.

Apart from a destination country's immigration policies, the prevailing emigration ecosystem in Ghana, the sending country, also impacts youth migration. First, due to bureaucracy and corruption passport acquisition takes at least 6 months for new potential

migrants (Peil, 1995). Grace (female, 20-24 years, nurse, Kumasi) noted that ‘if you want it quicker it’s either you know someone at the passport office, or you pay more and expensive money to fast-track it’. The failure of the government to facilitate speedy passport services themselves has created a marketisation of the migration process by other sellers or agents, popularly known as ‘connection men’,<sup>17</sup> for intending migrants to buy services at high-profit margins. These agents promise to deliver important documents for the visa application process, such as passports and birth certificates. It is worth mentioning that formal visa processes to most Western embassies have already been privatised. Outsourcing visa operations to large, multinational, for-profit companies, such as Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global has become common.



Figure 4: Roadside passport and birth certificate advert

Similarly, amid limited legal migration options, private educators also promise youth that they can begin studies locally and later continue at an overseas campus, as seen in Figure 5. Moreover, individual pastors encourage church attendance by offering some parishioners prophecies linked to migration overseas.

Money is an important means of exchange within these multiple sites embedded in the emigration environment. However, even for young people who are not income earners, ‘money is not the biggest challenge, but how one gets all travel documents or meet

<sup>17</sup> These are travel intermediaries whose service is procured by low to middle-income people who have weak social networks of persons working in institutions that facilitate the acquisition of travel documents.



requirements is' as Julius noted. Money is not considered a major barrier to migration given that migration is considered as a risk-avoidance strategy for families. Thus, in certain households, members collectively pull together resources to invest in the travel of a family member with the hope of future remittances and support for younger generations, ultimately reducing household vulnerability to economic crisis (Katz & Stark, 1986; de Haas, 2008; Coe, 2013).



Figure 5: Billboard advert on how education in Ghana can open doors to go 'global'

The above-mentioned restrictive policies are not exhaustive. However, they are indicative of some of the existing barriers to migration, the resultant effect as well as young people's reaction in the migration environment.

### **From aspiration to ability: four case studies**

Due to the barriers in the migration environment, youth must constantly negotiation logistics of travelling elsewhere. In order to explain how agency is deployed through various strategies and practices and the movement from *wish* or *aspiration* to *ability*, the fieldwork data of four young Ghanaians situated in transnational households will be explored as exemplars of these processes.

#### *Yaw*

Yaw is a senior high school graduate. Since graduating from school in 2014, he has not had any formal or consistent employment. Occasionally, he works at his father's cocoa farm, plays football or works with a chain saw operator to earn a 'little money'.

Being 20 years old and the eldest of 6 children, he wishes to be independent by having personal accommodation and an income-earning job to support his siblings. He feels he may never earn respect since he still depends on his poor parents for food and accommodation. He has a girlfriend, but he feels anxious that he will lose her if he is not independent.

Yaw's views about Ghana and migration are common among other young people. He feels 'there is no future here (his community)' for him due to lack of non-farming or formal jobs, no internet, and poor education. He complains about the corruption of public officials, and the fact that before he can even get into the Ghana Army or Nursing school, he needs to save between 3,000 (US\$556) to 5,000 (US\$927) Ghana cedis to pay for a 'connection' [to get a family relation or bribe non-relation] to gain admission. Within the next 10 years, he hopes to enter and graduate from training at the Ghana Army, travel overseas for work and return back to Ghana to help his family. He believes that hard work can help him achieve his dreams but with present conditions, he feels any form of work overseas would rather help him accumulate 'good money' to acquire assets such as a house or change his economic and social status when he returns to Ghana from overseas.

Coming from poverty and unable to financially support his migration aspirations, he feels it will be challenging to travel overseas. However, he will try all possible options including inquiring about sports-based scholarships and applying regularly for the American Diversity Visa Lottery. He feels his relations are unsupportive because they ignored his school fees and a passport application. His parents have ruled out mobilising money from family members for him to travel. As noted by his father, 'I can't go and borrow from people' for him to travel as 'doing that, you will only put pressure on the family and others.' Yaw is aware of the benefits and risks that most young migrants face, especially young Ghanaian females in the Middle East and North Africa region or Gulf Countries, noting:

*'For the ladies, they are really suffering in those countries. One of my nieces called and said that it is not easy living in the Arab countries. Sometimes they are not allowed to use a mobile phone. They may be forced into prostitution... There is not enough time for them to rest but there is no other job to do in Ghana... they prefer those countries for greener pastures. In the end, they may come back with money but sometimes with sickness.'*

For now, Yaw is an *aspiring* migrant, who believes in migration but lacks the financial *ability* to move. He is aware that without higher education and work qualification, scholarship or family support he may not be able to secure a visa or travel to his preferred countries, 'the United States, Canada or the United Kingdom.'

### *Julius*

Julius is the second born of seven siblings. He is a second-year tertiary education student in Ghana. He is the first among his parent's children to travel to the UK. Julius has a girlfriend and a son in the UK. He travelled as a visitor in 2008 and later on in 2012 for a college education. He comes from an elite class family with his father being a former high-ranking government official.

He is aware of the constraints regarding youth migration. He mentioned that 'young people are perceived as unlikely to return back home if given a visa' and as such he decided to make his 'virgin passport' [a passport without a travel visa] look trustworthy by travelling to the Netherlands and South Africa. Upon return, he 'was able to demonstrate the potential to return back to Ghana if given a visa.' Moreover, prior to applying for a UK visa, his sister coached him on 'tips and answers to say during the visa interview.' Additionally, he noted that, 'my uncle in the UK by then took me as his child and sponsored everything.'

Julius is one of many youths in Ghana who feel Ghanaian education has done young people a disservice by paying less attention to technical and vocational education. Thus, in 2012 he felt the need to travel to the UK for education with the support of his family.

For Julius, travelling to the UK was beneficial. In addition to studying, he worked and earned money, which he used to finance his education both in the UK and in Ghana. That being said, he currently prefers 'to have his master's education in Ghana.' He believes 'it is affordable to secure higher education in Ghana.' He has future plans to travel for business between the two nations.

Julius and his family seem to be aware of the migration environment and how to navigate migration constraints. For instance, he noted that his 'father opened a bank account for everyone, but he doesn't expect us to misuse the money despite the fact that it is yours.' Having a personal bank account with money is a major visa requirement. It is said to demonstrate economic ties to Ghana and to suggest the possibility of return after travelling. Additionally, the financial support and visa advice from social relations could be considered essential to the ability to travel to the UK.

### *Mercy*

Mercy, who has already been introduced, wants to return to the UK. She is aware of the nature of education in Ghana and its outcomes, and mentioned that: 'in school, we do a lot of chew and pour [memorisation and less critical thinking]... the school is not good, and after school too it is very difficult to get any job to do...If I complete my basic exams and I don't get a job I will be poor.' On a typical day, she goes to school and returns home to assist with house chores, as well as the selling of second-hand goods sent to Ghana by her father.

While her parents' desire to bring her to the UK, they are poor working-class immigrants employed under zero-hours contract. For them, it is impossible to meet the minimum of £18,600 annual income threshold for sponsoring a dependent. Her eldest sister equally desires to travel, but since she got married and made several failed attempts to attend school abroad, she feels it is 'too late to travel'. Any travel opportunities should go towards helping her younger sister. Mercy's parents and sister feel it may be impossible to bring her to the UK considering their economic condition and immigration rules. Her parents are church leaders in the UK and they sometimes call to pray with Mercy and her siblings for improvement immigration policies and their employment conditions. While discussing immigration rules, they commented that '... it is in the hands of God.' Part of the reason why they attribute Mercy's travelling to God is 'things have got difficult in the house-financially' as her father noted.

Mercy can be considered as an aspiring migrant, but while she aspires to move overseas, she and her parents equally lack the ability to move due to financial and immigration rules.

### *Linda*

Linda is 34 years old, married and a new mother living in the UK. She travelled to the UK to visit and work between 2004 and 2006. Linda's uncle in London provided an invitation letter for her visa application as well as accommodation on arrival. Additionally, her uncle assisted in finding a job, which enabled her to earn some income to recover his travel costs and save money for her living and education costs in Ghana.

In 2006, after completing her bachelor's degree in Ghana, she moved to the UK for work and subsequently applied for a master's degree programme. She had plans of returning to Ghana after her masters, but, as she put it, 'I'm still here because you never know if you

can even come back again.’ She works as a home caregiver noting that ‘It’s not easy’ [laughing]. While she feels in 2004 it was easier to find a job, it was rather difficult in 2006. As she put it:

*‘When we arrived, things had begun to change here. In the summer of 2005, it was difficult finding work... so in 2006 when I came, I couldn’t find work until only December, which was a caregiving role outside London. Finding a job was difficult. Even at that time I had a working visa, but I couldn’t find a job.’*

She considers migration an endeavour that improved her economic condition and social status. For instance, when she returned to Ghana after the 2004 visit, she shopped for herself and family members, and at school she was called *Bɔga*!

Since she started working in the UK recently, she has supported her two younger siblings to visit the UK. She notes that:

*‘I had support from my uncle to travel. If you travel outside Ghana, you are able to save enough to support the family. Basically, someone taking you abroad is expensive. Because you need to work hard to repay the person on the amount, he or she spent to take you abroad. I had to pay my uncle for all the cost he incurred on me and also support my siblings with their travel intentions.’*

Linda’s aspiration to migrate was partly made possible by her uncle. This implies the importance of family relations that enable migration aspirations and the actual possibility of migration. Her visa application was also successful perhaps because of her ties to higher education in Ghana and the assumption that she would return to Ghana to continue her education. More importantly, the culture of migration is clearly displayed at the family level as she also supported her siblings financially in their migration aspirations, just like her uncle.

### **Conclusion: Young Ghanaian’s aspiration and ability to move as interrelated**

Drawing from the above interview data, it is clear that migration aspirations are not sufficient to secure mobility. First of all, the condition of the interpersonal network between an aspiring young migrant and their adult relations is critical to enabling the ability to move.

For instance, where young people like Julius and Linda had social ties with adult social relations abroad and in Ghana, they gained support for their migration intentions through visa requirements such as invitation letter, funding and accommodation. Overall, this suggests that migration projects are more collective than individualistic among these households.

That being said, individual aspirations to move may be affected by social structures such as age, gender, household composition, parents' economic conditions and immigration policies. In Ghana, the eldest child is often encouraged to migrate with the belief that successful migration can enable the eldest to care for siblings, including economic caring practices that support their education and mobility intentions. Additionally, boys are encouraged to move as they are socialised to be economic players and breadwinners, which sometimes can be achieved through migration. This practice is highly embedded in patrilineal household traditions that obligate men to financially support themselves, and ultimately their wives, children and extended family. This does not necessarily mean that girls do not migrate. But rather, girls in most traditional households are expected to be dependent on a man, and involved in non-economic, domestic, and home-based work (Hashim 2005:33), although it is also recognised that there is a long tradition of women working in the commercial economy, especially as market traders (Clark, 2010).

Additionally, the relationship between aspiration and ability to move is influenced by the family's economic condition. As noted in the case of Mercy, poor economic conditions resulted in separation from her parents. While this may not be a complete separation due to the extended family capacity to support her as their own, it is worth pointing out the constraints with her mobility due to new immigration policies that monetise family reunification within the migration policy environment, thereby affecting individual and collective household migration aspirations. Mostly, economic class is an important factor defining who moves and who stays behind. Where children's social relations are wealthy or elite, they are likely to have the needed economic resources and social support to negotiate their way through the various structural constraints within the migration environment. For instance, in the context of Julius, given that he comes from a wealthy family, he was able to receive essential financial support and immigration advice to travel to other countries like the Netherlands to build what can be called *migration credit* to prove himself *travel-worthy* for a visa to high ranking countries like the UK on his migration aspiration list. Lastly, the

role of education in understanding the relationship between aspiration and ability to move cannot be underestimated. The failure of education in many developing countries encourages young people to move to other places. That being said, higher education aspirations with ties to an academic institution in Ghana can enhance young people's visa acquisition chances as experienced in the context of Linda. Conversely, young people who have low education have limited chances and ability to move based on educational opportunity.

While the main motivations behind youth migration for suitable work or education has not changed, in the era of globalisation, amid the challenges of maturing to adulthood in Ghana, there is a growing level of inequality in the form of resources and capital that potential migrants encounter when attempting to convert their aspirations to reality. Similarly, growing middle-class lifestyles and social expectations, which may not be attainable at home, feed a desire to move elsewhere. Respondents narratives can be situated in relation to local expectations, globalisation, perceived differences between global/normative forms of childhood, and limited local possibilities which cause these young people to desire for life elsewhere.

Within the migration environment, three categories of young people can be identified: First, persons from low-income families who may have desires and aspirations to move, but they lack the needed social networks and economic resources. In this context, it is worth mentioning that desires and aspirations are important in the pre-migration phase of the migration process. Secondly, older youth from middle-class or wealthy families with households that support migration aspirations. Thirdly, are those youth who have a desire but are unable to realise it, so after a while this desire disappears or diminishes, as noted in the context of Mercy's eldest sister. The majority of young respondents in this research who were located in Ghana can be categorised under the first description. They have aspirations of moving but have been unable to translate their aspirations into actual migration due to the aforementioned barriers.

Growing up with political-economic challenges, including stringent migration regimes, leaves young people in low-income and poorly connected social classes at the margins of globalisation. In other words, restrictive immigration reforms, including family reunification monetisation, can be understood in terms of an exclusionary practice by liberal democracies and capitalist states. Similarly, the ability to migrate is a by-product of

privilege as it excludes the low-income and poorly connected from the benefits of globalisation. This should be considered a matter of concern in development interventions that aim to address economic and social inequalities, wage-level disparity, employment opportunities and social well-being differences, which underpin the aspiration/ability model.

Categorising young people as a risky group also indicates how neoliberal states are reconstituting children/childhood and youth from hegemonic notions of an *at-risk* group to the *risk* that needs to be treated differently under immigration regimes. Instead of just labelling young people as the *risk* to a potential destination country, their migration projects should be seen within the spectrum of negotiating life to ‘get ahead’ and return back once a young person has ‘made it’ (Esson, 2015). In particular, the young people in this study are aspirational. They imagine a future where they support themselves and their families and consider migration as a route towards those dreams. Additionally, they are aware of their social position and therefore construct themselves as subjects through a process of self-making to overcome local constraints in a globalising world.

The growing level of immigration restrictions over the past two decades explained why despite the ‘culture of migration,’ the 2010 migration census reported few numbers of Ghanaian international migrants. Consequently, children in Ghanaian transnational families cannot simply be presumed as future migrants to the US or the UK due to recent immigration policy reforms. The likely outcome of these policies is the continued separation and scattered nature of family (Coe, 2013), which requires accomplishing reproductive needs, including parenting, short term visits, remittance transfers and childcare, across borders (Parreñas, 2001a; 2005a). However, for children whose parents are undocumented and poor, their form of transnational engagement is likely to be constrained to other forms of transnational practices and spatialised global householding, including the exchange of images to create a feeling of familyhood. Moreover, one of the consequences of the growing restrictive migration policies is the fact that most young people will be forced into the position of making riskier journeys that are often undocumented and vulnerable to abuses, as noticed among young Ghanaian female domestic workers in the Middle East (Graphic Ghana, 2019). Similarly, the growing challenges within the migration environment including the strict visa regime and the limited chances of visa acquisition for certain young people can also contribute to overstaying their visa for young people who feel they are unlikely to have a second chance of going to a destination country.





## Chapter 5

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### **Doing family: Transnational practices and children's local lives in times of economic crisis**

#### **Introduction**

Transnational migration and transnationalism literature has prompted new ways of understanding how migrant and non-migrants located at different places maintain social relations and undertake specific practices across national borders (Basch et al., 1994; Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002b; Schiller & Levitt, 2004; Coe, 2013). In an effort to understand the nature of transnational migration, scholars have theorised *transnational social space* or *transnational field* synonymously to represent fluid social spaces and networks of social relationships through which migrants and non-migrants sustain ties, organise, exchange and transform ideas, practices, and resources (Faist 2000:189; Vertovec 2003; Schiller & Levitt 2004; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007; Faist et al. 2013). A vital aspect of the functioning of the transnational social field is money and goods exchange, cultural practices, values and people's movement (either physical or imagined) across nations as part of everyday lives. More so, most migrant household members, have to negotiate their survival amid political, immigration and economic welfare reforms; balancing production relations and reproductive tasks including housework, childcare, education, participating in social events and employment. Sometimes some of these everyday needs and tasks are displaced or dispersed across the transnational social field due to state policies and constraints.

Drawing on fieldwork data, this Chapter engages with the discussion on the transnational migration process, the practice of *doing family* and children's role as social actors in periods of economic constraints that consequently alter household practices of accomplishing social reproduction. Incidents of economic constraints discussed in this Chapter relates to family poverty that causes rural-urban child migration for work in Ghana, rising childcare cost and mothers' experiences of exploitative working conditions (including long working hours and low income) in the UK, and unemployment situation of return migrant families in Ghana. These crises are mainly as a result of austerity and welfare reforms in the UK as well as neoliberalism in Ghana. However, the practice in question here is the increasing number of children at different stages of family migration processes who

support reproductive processes that help to mitigate the impact of economic constraints. Thus, in this Chapter, I do not intend to discuss how parental migration affects non-migrant children. Instead, I intend to analyse how children's presence and participation in imagined or actual migration processes and how daily life practices of the transnational household serves to constitute the transnational social field. The contributions of Olwig in transnational migration studies has inspired theoretical contributions on the need to move beyond ethnic and homeland-diaspora relations to explain 'the practice of home, a domestic household unit,' (Olwig 2002: 216). Similarly, Mahler has argued that research on transnational practices may 'yield detailed information on a limited set of activities and practices, not a clear picture of the breadth of the social field, nor of the demography or intensity of players' participation in all the activities people engage in' (1998:82). Thus, by focusing on 'invisible children' in migration processes (White *et al.*, 2011), I utilise data obtained from my fieldwork on the everyday lives of transnational families to explain the role and meaning of the family and therefore the relevance of the global household in how we construct the shifting terrain of the social field experience in periods where migrants and non-migrants have to negotiate both economic, social and political constraints.

In *doing family*, natal children and the 'other children,' embedded within the transnational social field I discuss in this Chapter were situated in Ghana with adults but kept strong social relations (physically or through technological/virtual means) while performing social reproductive activities. These practices are essential to understanding the materiality of critical topographies and therefore the effects of globalisation and the transnational household's material social practices.

Drawing on the use of Levitt and Glick Schiller's distinction between *ways of being* and *ways of belonging* in the transnational social fields – between maintaining social relations and practices as well as ensuring social belonging – this Chapter discusses how to understand various practices between migrants and non-migrants and its transnational dimension. Moreover, I investigate, whether these practices are a reflection of how migrants (re)orientate their direction to their place of origin through daily practices.

### **A critique of the dominant notions and the emergence of a transnational perspective**

Twenty years ago, Massey et al. (1998:3) posited that: 'The theoretical concepts now employed by social scientists to analyse and explain international migration were forged primarily in the industrial era and reflect its particular economic arrangements, social

institutions, technology, demography and politics. ... The classical approach has now entered a state of crisis, challenged by new ideas, concepts, and hypotheses.’ Since the 1990s, notable transnational migration approaches have emerged as a way of capturing family formations in relation to links that exist between migrants and non-migrants and the economic, political, and cultural conditions influencing their practices and symbolic meanings (Portes et al., 1999; Faist, 2000; Foner, 2000; Levitt, 2001b, 2001a; Schiller & Fouron, 2001; Morawska, 2003; Vertovec, 2004b; Faist et al., 2013) in what can be termed as the *transnational turn*. For instance, Portes et al. (1999) and Vertovec (1999) applied transnationalism in exploring what it means to live in an interconnected and topographically complex world without depending exclusively on structural and macro-economic assumptions. Additionally, a considerable body of research on transnationalism have explored myriad issues ranging from ‘migrant circuits’ encompassing multidirectional flows of people, goods and resources (Faist et al. 2013:1-11); the formation of ‘transnational families,’ the ways of living and the maintenance households across space (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002b); liminal and hybrid subjectivities between places (Bhabha 1994; Lowe 1996); the state-migrant nexus (Schiller, 2005); settlement and integration of migrants in the new societies that they have moved into (Schiller and Levitt, 2004), formation of transnational identities as well as their transnational economic, political, religious and socio-cultural practices (de Haas, 2008). Despite notable progress in the past two decades, transnational migration studies are dominated by concepts and methodological approaches emphasising binational exchanges, movements and organisations. Moreover, the state and its role in controlling moving subjects have often been the point of departure for intellectual hypothesis and research questions and analysis to the neglect of the everyday lives and social configurations (Castles 2010:1566). In effect, diasporic and transnational studies have also been studied separately. However, as I will explain with my data, diasporic activities are also critical to the functioning of everyday transnational and local lives of moving subjects involving multiple people and locations (including rural-urban and across borders as well as organisations and kin and non-kin networks).

Migration reconfigures family relations, causing new ways of managing families. Global capitalism is fuelled by the labour migration of both men and women (Ehrenreich & Hochschild, 2003; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2013; Veale & Dona, 2014). In the face of economic and legal constraints that prevent the immediate movement of other relations,

‘transnational families’ and ‘global householding’ has become widespread. The terms transnational family and global householding are used widely in the transnational migration literature to conceptualise transnational behaviours of migrants and the globalisation and displacement of social reproduction cost<sup>18</sup> (Parreñas 2005; Coe 2013:8), thereby shifting the migration discourse beyond labour mobility and remittances into understanding the maintenance of family formations across borders. The articulations of ‘transnational families’ and ‘global householding’ have often been shaped by the phenomenon of care workers migration, partner migration, existing immigration and settlement policies and how the household manages various processes such as marriage, childbearing, child or elderly care and education, daily household maintenance and division of labour or responsibility (Douglass, 2013). Families in which parents or children become migrants at a point are known as transnational families (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002:3). They may live separately at different places and yet create and maintain a ‘feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely familyhood, even across national borders’ (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002:3). On the other hand, global householding exists where the ‘formation and sustenance of households is increasingly reliant on the global movement of people and transactions among household members originating from or residing in more than one national territory’ (Douglass, 2006:423). A global household is defined as comprising the people who migrate, plus the people who are born into or otherwise incorporated into the immigrant household (e.g., through marriage or cohabitation) and additionally people left behind in the origin country. It therefore underscores existing relationships between the household unit – involving family networks of nuclear and extended families and friends. Both terms – transnational families and global household - connote how families adapt to changes due to mobility and migration. However, while transnational familyhood tends to emphasise the social and emotional capacity of the family, the global household stresses how the movement of people requires the household as a space of production and consumption to adopt new ways of functioning materially. Considering the complexities of these two terms, in this Chapter, I prefer *transnational household(s)* to *transnational families* or *global household*. The transnational household will be useful to emphasise the incorporation of ‘other children’ in

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<sup>18</sup> By social reproduction I refer to ‘the interdependent reproduction both of the social relations within which, and the materials and discursive means through which, social life is premised, sustained and transformed over time’ (Lee 2000:760) or : ‘material and social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis’ (Katz 2001:711).

the household, thus moving the focus beyond kin to include non-kin and social kin household members who were very key ‘players’(Mahler 1998:82) in this research and whose experiences and practices are relevant to social reproduction processes.

Having identified the transnational families and the global household, it is also important to note that since the 1990s, a number of scholars have also made efforts to identify different types of transnational constructions, under what is termed *transnationalism* within a social space to understand the functioning of ties between migrants and non-migrants as well as the symbolic and subjective meanings attached to transnational practices and the affective relationships between migrants, their children and homeland (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Schiller & Levitt, 2004; Vertovec, 2009). Within this scope of scholarly work, it has also been argued that variations exist in terms of ties and practices to underscore how transnational practices should not be limited to only cross-border activities but most importantly should extend to the inclusion of non-migrant or immobile populations and their ‘transnational social imaginaries’ and ‘transnational consciousness’ (Vertovec, 2009; Coe, 2012).

Traditional migration literature has been criticised for taking children’s role in the migration process for granted. In particular, children’s influence in decision making within transnational families has also received some limited attention. Children’s present choices, constraints and aspirations may influence parental migration motives (Orellana et al., 2001; Parreñas, 2005a; Coe, 2011b; Tyrrell, 2011). This forms part of the conceptual view around varied forms of children’s agency in the migration process. Tyrrell (2011) identifies distinctions between children’s *thick* and *thin* agency in migratory decision making depending on the birth order and gender). A related critique is a tendency in assuming that migration is an adult worker’s endeavour. To challenge these dominant notions, a segment of the literature addresses young people’s independent migration. Hashim (2005), Whitehead & Hashim (2005), Kwankye et al. (2009), Hashim & Thorsen (2011) and Thorsen (2014) have explored the situation of independent child migrants in Ghana and across borders in Africa. Their findings have further challenged the categorisation of independent child migrants as vulnerable or ‘other’ children and consequent policy interventions branding lone migrants as ‘problematic’ or ‘out of place’(White et al. 2011:1163; Crivello 2015:39). Likewise, children are metaphorically considered ‘the luggage’ and economic dependents of parental migration (Orellana et al. 2001: 578; Crivello

2015:39). In contrast to this representation of childhood, evidence by Orellana et al. (2001) for instance has emphasised children's active role in migration processes under various forms of mobilities and transnational practices, including 'parachute kids', whose migration strategy aims for upward social class mobility. Likewise, Punch's (2007b; 2014) seminal work with rural Bolivian children and their migration to Argentina highlights young people's agential competence in periods of crisis by pursuing fundamental life course aspirations, work and education, the outcomes of which includes self-development and autonomy.

Most research in transnational fields also suggests that children must be kin members of the transnational family to be engaged in transnational practices (Waters & Levitt, 2002; Schiller & Levitt, 2004). For instance, in most cases there is a dominant focus on children of migrants or migrant children in the receiving country (Gardner & Mand, 2012) which often tends to underestimate non-migrant and non-kin young people's subjective experiences, their agency and how they forge paths that may be independent of their parent's complete involvement (Orellana et al., 2001).

In this Chapter, I will underscore how *doing family* – the organisation and understanding of family – is an essential aspect of young people's survival strategies by which they place themselves actively or are incorporated in local, national and transnational social fields, especially in periods of economic change (including crisis situations of parent's unemployment, rising cost of living and childcare in host countries, poverty and lack of necessities in rural communities and economic constraints in urban centres). The material social practices that are produced across critical topographies offer important grounds for understanding spatialised social and political relations as well as children's role in responding to the effects of political-economic change, uneven development, globalised capitalism production, and restrictive immigration policies (Katz, 2001:721). Moreover, I employ the concept of transnationalism (and to a lesser extent *translocal* given that non-migrant children are embedded in local practices in addition to international) as a practice and imaginaries to analyse social relations between migrants (including those who have recently returned to Ghana) and non-migrants. By this, I will also depend on Schiller & Levitt's (2004: 1010-11) unique categorisation of transnational social networks and the consciousness of being embedded in transnational social fields as part of the 'ways of being' (i.e. engagement in social relations and practices) and 'ways of belonging' (i.e. practices that

signal or enact identity to a group, country or community). Additionally, Levitt and Glick have underscored *simultaneity*, in understanding migrant's daily lives and the possibility to live simultaneously between two places. Thus, it is important to understand transnationalism between migrants and non-migrants concerning their practices and how various practices are undertaken particularly in a period of economic change that has an impact on daily lives.

### **Children and patterns of migration: three cases**

Transnational social fields involve social relations of both migrants and non-migrants with diverse forms of organisation, history, migration patterns and practices. Thus, to begin with, I will describe three families and its nature of organisation and critical activities. Also, I will focus on children's distinctive role as social actors in the process of forming 'new' networks and *doing family* as well as their contribution to the household which potentially has an impact in reducing economic crisis' impact. By this, I will explore, the various ways in which children are positioned in the transnational social field as well as the constraints and opportunities experienced in migration processes.

#### *Family 1: From rural-urban child migrant into becoming a transnational household member*

This household consists of Geraldine (56-year-old single mother), Stella (Geraldine's 13-year-old daughter, living in London) and Geraldine's 'other' child Ama Duku (17 year-old-girl, living in Kumasi). Geraldine has older children who live and work in London; one is a 22-year-old woman who is a primary school teacher, and the other is in her late thirties working as a school headteacher in London. Although I met her older children and interacted with them occasionally, my regular research conversations were mainly with Geraldine, Stella and Ama Duku.

Internal (in-country) migration by young people, mainly from rural to urban communities is a widespread phenomenon in Ghana. The underlying reason for this form of movement is improved economic livelihoods, money and a 'better life' and these themes were common in the narratives of my Ghana-based respondents whose relations in London had directed me to interview. For instance, Ama Duku, 13-year-old child migrant, moved from a village to the city of Kumasi. She described the village as a place where she had no access to good education, walked long hours to school, and after school she always had to



rush to the farm to join her mother in weeding and carry firewood to the house. To her farm work is difficult and dangerous; sometimes they are bitten by snakes, food was insufficient and thus she had to depend on fruits like pawpaw on the farm. On arrival in Kumasi, she lived with her mother's family friend 'house-help,' engaging in daily activities including sweeping, cleaning, fetching water and selling drinking water (popularly known as pure water). Being the eldest daughter, she occasionally sends 'mobile money,' local money transfer to her mother to support their needs including house maintenance, education and food. This practice goes to prove her translocal way of being and belonging (Coe 2013:9). Now at the age of 17, she has completed Junior High School (JHS), and as at 2016 when I met her, she had been admitted into senior high school. My London-based respondent, Geraldine, a 56-year-old woman, met Ama Duku in 2014 as she used to buy water from Ama when she visited Ghana. Ama Duku often fetched water for her as a returnee due to water-flow irregularities. My interaction with Geraldine, while speaking with her in Ghana after my initial meeting with Ama Duku, proved that she pitied Ama after listening to her village life experience. Ama in a later conversation had also told me about her the struggles with city life including insufficient food and long working hours. Ama noted that sometimes she goes to school on an empty stomach or takes a kenkey<sup>19</sup> from home and ask for gravy from school friends at lunchtime. In Ghana, it is common for adults to adopt children into the family; as Geraldine remark, 'we are all God's children' and that:

*Obi nnim obrempon ahyase* (Nobody knows the beginning of a great man).<sup>20</sup>

Ama Duku refers to Geraldine as her *mother*. After four years since she met Geraldine, she has become a member of a transnational family with imaginings and future hope of joining her in London and to attend university or work. Likewise, Geraldine sees Ama as her daughter. As the '*other child*,' Ama proactively uses various tools and language as part of the process of ensuring her social position in the transnational household and therefore *doing family*. She sends biblical and motivational messages to Geraldine every morning, even at the risk phone confiscation if noticed by boarding school authorities as the use of mobile phones in schools is not allowed for students (Parreñas 2001; Salazar Parreñas 2008:1068). She changes her WhatsApp profile picture to that of Geraldine or Stella (whom

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<sup>19</sup> Kenkey, also known as *dorkunu* in Twi language is a staple Ghanaian food made from corn dough

<sup>20</sup> This is said to mean that beginning of greatness in a person is unpredictable. Thus, humble beginnings and the struggling person must not be despised.

she has never met) regularly and occasionally, including on Mother's Day, and writes messages addressing them as 'Sweet Mother' and 'My Sweet Sister'.

Before going to Ghana, Geraldine informed me about her house in Ghana, as a place I could stay to 'bring some life in the house.' Like most migrants, Geraldine has built a house in Kumasi with no one living in it from day-to-day. However, when Ama Duku told her about some of the challenges that she faced with her first host family in Kumasi, as noted earlier, Geraldine decided to speak with Ama's mother in the village to take full responsibility of the child. Ama currently lives and takes care of the house of Geraldine's house and sometimes she travels to Accra when Geraldine is back for holidays in Ghana. Her caretaking responsibilities of the house meant that 'there is life in the house';<sup>21</sup> she cleans the house and goes on errands for Geraldine given that Geraldine does not have a child or 'trusted' direct relations whom she relies on for housework in Ghana. In Ghana, when an extended family relation lives in the house of a transnational migrant, there is the fear and suspicion over a claim of ownership or non-payment of rent by the occupant. Thus, instead of allowing kin relations to stay in the house, Geraldine rather trusts and relies on an adult-child network to maintain her '*bɔga fie*' (house built with migrant remittances and material resources) to avoid close family controversies over the property.

Being part of the transnational family, Ama receives remittances from London for consumer goods such as food, mobile phone credit as well as school funds, which is essential given the rising cost of public education. In particular, in 2016 on my return to Ghana, Geraldine gave me money, clothing and a power-bank for Ama, making it cheaper and more accessible for her to send remittances to Ama. Three months into my stay in Ghana, her *mother* in London asked me to verify boarding school materials (i.e. student mattress, trunk and a chop box) cost for her to remit money for the purchase of these materials for Ama. It seems fairly evident that without Ama's social incorporation into the transnational family these material resources would have been unobtainable by her.

#### *Family II: Sending the child back to Ghana to a non-kin social relation*

I first met Florence (a 38-year-old woman) and her daughter, Afia (7-year-old girl) at the 2016 Kumasi-Tech Association summer barbecue. After a brief familiarity- building discussion at the event, I arranged for an interview with Florence. She remarked, 'the

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<sup>21</sup> Among Akan's it is believed that when a house empty without occupants, evil spirits may take over or the house may collapse sooner or later.

Hometown Association has been very helpful to her family.’ In particular, when she was bereaved with the loss of her brother, the association’s financial donation paid for her travel to Ghana. Being a beneficiary of the organisation’s funds demands reciprocal acts of belonging including attending monthly meetings organised in London as well as payment of membership dues.

Afia came home after school and met me when I had finished her mum’s interview. Her mum asked her to ‘go and greet uncle,’ and in doing so she remarked ‘oh you are my lost uncle.’ Upon reflection on her comment, I realised that she expected me to be regularly present in the house and not be the ‘lost’ relation or uncle. My research and social position by then was more than a researcher interested in her life; instead, I was viewed as an uncle or family relation who needed to be present regularly in her house.

Afia’s mum had already told me about the reason why she sent her to Kumasi, Ghana. She was born in the UK but sent to Ghana at the age of three years and returned to London when she was six years. Her mother, a single parent, working as a security guard with low income, felt it was near impossible for her to accomplish her economic goals, meet her Ghana-based father’s remittance obligations while spending considerable time on childcare.<sup>22</sup> With the childcare constraints, Florence’s friend spoke to his mother who accepted to take care of Afia in Ghana. She made a Ghanaian passport for her daughter to travel on to Ghana and to avoid ‘Ghana visa’ application for future travels. Thus, wanting to a *better life* as most migrants look for (Coe 2013:6), reducing the stress and having better childcare and training were crucial factors in sending Afia to Ghana. This suggests that amid rising economic challenges and high childcare costs Florence was conscious about engaging a non-kin network in performing ‘what it means to be a mother,’ that is ensuring child discipline on wrongdoing, cooking, keeping in close contact with school and participating in the child’s after-school activities and reading bed-time stories at night for the child, all of which she felt she was unable to accomplish in London. While this emphasised expectations of a good mother, it also points to the constraints that moving subjects face in belonging to and being settled in London at large. This everyday focus is also manifested in Afia’s views on intimacy with her mother while growing up in Ghana. Here, the mixed emotions and therefore her emotional attachment emerged more strongly than the economic goal presented by her mother:

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<sup>22</sup> Coe (2013:115-6) observed similar practices in her research.

*'I still don't understand why my mother took me to Ghana and left me there at such a younger age when I needed her most... At one point, I liked the toys she sent to my friends and me. She also called often on skype, but sometimes after speaking with her, I doubted if she was my mother as she was not here [in Ghana] with me. Yes, I was taken to Ghana and I am back in London. I learned Twi language, and my grandmother taught me how to speak Twi and respect people ...but I miss her [my grandmother] now that I am back in London and also my friends in Ghana.'*

When children move to Ghana, they learn to speak Twi (a local Ghanaian language), and moral lessons that contribute to building cultural capital is one of the critical parenting goals of most Ghanaian parents. For Afia to learn and understand Twi was very fundamental to Florence as she felt this is important in constructing Afia's identity beyond being a British citizen and (re)orientating the child towards her homeland as a parent.

Florence commented to highlight the importance of everyday life and interaction either with Afia or to get her to speak with relations in Ghana: 'Now since she came back from Ghana, we are able to communicate better. It makes it easier whenever I am with her; sometimes when you speak English even in the bus, everyone knows what you are saying but at least I am able to keep some secret with her through our local language and she is able to, when she has to speak with people in Ghana who do not speak English.'

Afia's carer, an elderly woman whom I met in Ghana, had a very pragmatic view of her family's relations to London and migrants:

*'It is not easy to train Aburokyire nkwadaa (being overseas-born Ghanaian children) .... Florence and others tell me you cannot beat a child because your child can be taken from you and also they don't have much time to take care of the child. For here sometimes some people pamper aburokyire nkwadaa but I disciplined Afia when she did something wrong. I was sad when she left, she was crying when Florence came for her. It's sad Florence also hardly calls me on the phone since she left for London.'*

Children's movement between places may have an emotional cost for themselves, their parents and carers. Physical absence and separation cause parents and carers to worry

emotionally. Similarly, children may not understand their parent's decision. However, they choose to do so in order to allow the children to acquire cultural capital (e.g. local language competence) and ultimately to provide care for the child in ways impossible for them to accomplish at some point as migrant workers. Though technological tools (e.g. phone calls), may produce connections between people, this sense of worry suggests the contradiction that exists within economic and emotional transnational intergenerational relationships.

*Family III: Children returning home with parents*

Lina (30-year-old wife), Jonathan (35-year-old husband), their three children (aged six, three and two) and Jonathan's sister-in-law, thirteen-year-old Adwoa from the third family. Both Lina and Jonathan lived in the UK for six years on a Tier 4 visa, while Jonathan was pursuing doctoral studies in 2010. All their children were born in the UK, but they do not possess British passports.

Jonathan together with the children and Lina, his wife, moved to Ghana after being unsuccessful in securing a job during the period of his doctoral extension stay in the UK. Lina had also experienced post-pregnancy and delivery complications, so she was incapacitated to work. David noted that one other reason why he had to make the hard choice of moving to Ghana, given that he did not have a job in Ghana either was that, of the high cost of settling the whole family in the UK. To secure a visa, he needed to have an employer sponsor his visa or otherwise have a minimum of £10,120 in financial proof to demonstrate that he could take care of himself and three dependents. However, the financial proof is more challenging having dependents and the need to demonstrate extra funds for taking care of dependents. Similarly, visa processing cost was about £900 per person and having to apply for four more dependents was unbearable.

When I met Jonathan in Ghana, he was unemployed and 'job hunting,' which also seems to contradict the notion that Ghanaian employers favour overseas qualifications. Lina was equally unemployed but was enrolled in a teacher training programme with government bursary.

In my interaction with Adwoa, I discovered that her mother had asked her to go and help Lina when they returned from London. However, after her first week, she decided to relocate to Lina's house from a suburban community outside Kumasi. Like Ama Duku, Adwoa noted that her weekdays are packed with activities 'including bathing the children, cooking, sweeping the house's compound, running errands in addition to having to focus on

her studies given that she was in the final year of junior high school.’ ‘My siblings are very good... I learn many things from helping my sister... they will help me when I grow to be a wife,’ she added.

Lina and Jonathan spent six years in the UK but unlike Florence, they seem to have experienced a weak connection to a close-knit Ghanaian community in the UK to offer support in times of constraints. Not having any supportive relatives in London during Lina’s ill-health meant that a lot of the housework, including bathing children, cooking and laundry which are considered women’s work in Ghana fell on him to undertake. Also, he worked in security to earn an income for living and had no time for social activities. ‘It is an opportunity to go for social events, and you may not be able to take care of the cost of running your home on day to day basis... It was not easy... the children were affected as I could not even take them out for play activities like swimming and social events outside the home as some of these cost money’ he commented.

While Lina and Jonathan, view their return as a hard decision, they considered it a better choice given the support from Adwoa who takes care of tasks which may be considered girls work. Jonathan described the children as ‘they have not gotten used to the system... they are not Ghanaian yet,’ to indicate the children’s way of being British even while in Ghana. He spoke about some of the challenges and constraints with the return which is very connected to consumption of Ghanaian goods by contrasting between London and Kumasi (Ghana):

*‘In Ghana, most of the products on the market are not genuine. When my children take the baby milk products from here, they have stomach upset, and the diaper for the youngest one always gives skin rashes. The reason why Christiana, (32-year-old–woman and one of my London-based respondents) gave you these items is that I told her about the situation and she said she would send me some things when you are coming.’*

With the return and consumption of local or imported goods being challenging, Jonathan deployed his network with Christina to obtain informal remittances, including second-hand clothing of Christina’s children and food products while I was returning to Ghana.

Jonathan further commented that ‘When the children sit in a *‘trɔtrɔ’* (local transport in Ghana) and they want a seatbelt people give the expression, ‘what kind of children are these? But it is because they were not born here, and I try to explain to them.’ By using public transport in Ghana, some Ghanaians sometimes see such a returnee as a ‘failed migrant’. The challenge with adjusting to transport system in Ghana may represent the ‘other’ childhood experienced in the UK and likewise Jonathan’s comment reinforces a sense of ‘otherness’, being ‘out of place’ and perhaps the fact that the children do not *belong* to Ghana but have been forced to relocate to Ghana due to visa reasons.

### **Local activities and transnational practices in everyday life**

Internal migration and in particular the phenomenon of rural-urban migration represents one of the actions that young people take in responding to daily basic needs challenges such as food as well as inequalities and constraints in accessing quality education and other services (Coe 2013:64). Though the original intention of migrating to the city may not be to enter a transnational household, there is sometimes the possibility of children coming into contact with return migrants who may sometimes bring these ‘other’ children into their family. The family cases one and three that I drew on for this Chapter highlights girls who are actively engaged in mobilities and social reproduction activities including housework and caretaking of children or the physical assets of transnational migrants. More so, their mobilities and work in transnational households allow them to receive financial and material resources for which some may be remitted to their left-behind rural relations.

In some ways, the experience of Ama Duku and Adwoa, contests notions about rural-urban migrants in Ghana. Child migrants to major cities like Kumasi may enter into petty trading activities like selling water on the streets of the city. While some children may be vulnerable exploitation, the dominant representation of these girls as vulnerable to sexual exploitation and boys to robbery gangs needs to be reconsidered. Sometimes they are beaten by city guards or their items are confiscated to inform them that they are ‘out of place’ and not needed in the city. The response from child respondents suggested that they made informed decisions with reliable social networks in the city. Additionally, Ama Duku, for instance, increased the strength of her city network by meeting and working for a transnational migrant who has eventually offered her accommodation and taking care of her education while Adwoa also lived with her kin-relations. Thus, it is important to understand why children move and consider the networks of protection that children may form as part

of their mobilities rather than categorising them as vulnerable or ‘out of place’ and therefore needing forceful intervention as ‘other children’.

Adwoa and Ama’s daily lives were heavily involved in the reproductive work of cooking or taking care of children which is seen as girls’ or women’s work in Ghana. However, caretaking of a transnational migrant’s house is often viewed as a male-dominated task because of the ideology that a woman cannot defend male robbers if the need arises. However, gender does not feature as a critical element in consideration by the homeowner and the home caretaker’s decision for this unpaid work by Geraldine’s family. Instead, accomplishing the daily tasks of caretaking and maintain contact through the use of technological tools and keeping to reciprocal gestures of Geraldine supporting Ama’s education seems to be significant in strengthening the social relationship and ensuring Ama’s social position as the ‘other’ child who is being cared for with remittances and accommodation. The family experiences underscore children’s role in reproductive activities and therefore the relevance of understanding transnational ways of being and belonging from everyday life experience.

The process of *doing family* by being physically present together or being apart but connected via WhatsApp technology and the imagination of *being* together through shared images and calls also underscores the interlinking of distance and closeness as seen in the case of Ama. There were times that I observed her making calls in the *safety and comfort* of Geraldine’s house in Ghana. Though they were a long distance apart, calls and text messages and changing of profile pictures could be described as a way of being ‘connected as a family’ through memories, nostalgia and imagination (Schiller & Levitt 2004:1011). Moreover, the phone calls allow for the presence of Geraldine as a mother in the life of her ‘other child’ at a distance and vice versa for Ama who sees a mother to be located at a distance in London. Additionally, calls allow Geraldine to know the situation of her property which she only gets in about twice in a year when she visits Ghana. This experience and relationship between Ama and Geraldine raises important questions though outside the scope of this Chapter, about role of the ‘unpaid’ children’s work in helping Ghanaian migrants in the UK to stay in London with limited worry about their house and especially when most of these migrants are interested in acquiring property in Ghana to diversify income in order to survive the growing cost of living in London.



Florence and Jonathan's family had similar reasons regarding sending their children back 'home'. Their expressed reasons, to a large extent, are linked to how the political economy including immigration rules, fears of knife-crime among children, high demands of work including limited time for parents or limited social support to provide care at home in addition to rising childcare cost. Afia's mother noted that she made the decision in the *best interest of her child*, to allow her to work and earn an income to give her child that *better life* most migrants look for. Yet, as noted earlier, when Afia described her experience growing up in Ghana, the complexities of emotional attachment emerged more strongly than the economic goal of Florence (Parreñas 2001; Coe 2013:176).

Similarly, during fieldwork in Ghana, Afia's carer, explained in detail the caregiving experience when she was in Ghana. However, she lamented that she misses Afia and that her mother no longer calls as frequently as she used to when Afia was in Ghana. Two issues are significant here: First is the process of shifting the cost of social reproduction from the UK by the parent to Ghana in a period of UK welfare reforms. Secondly, the child's role and agency in constructing and maintaining networks (especially in the age of cheap calls through WhatsApp and other call platforms), became obvious and perhaps may not be treated as important until after the child returns to the UK. That said, as noted earlier the child's agency and the transnational connection via phone and remittances was not considered sufficient reason by the child in terms of being sent to Ghana. Thus, to understand the transnational social field complexities, depth of practices and how they are maintained as well as social reproduction dynamics, it is useful to track various members at different places, as well as seek the views of other relevant members of the transnational social space.

Still, in taking children to Ghana for childcare, children's contact with their grandparents and other relations over a period of time contribute to building connections to Ghana and with people, for both the parent and the children. As noted earlier, children's presence in Ghana is a significant reason parents may return or keep in touch with relations or people in Ghana. For Ama, being taken care by a foster parent created a personal connection to 'grandma' and the first and foremost experience of improving knowledge of Twi as a result of day to day communication with people in Ghana, including her friends and grandma. Despite the fact that parents take children to Ghana for childcare and training, this can also orientate children towards seeing Ghana as 'home'. Perhaps an issue outside the

scope of this paper is whether children will really shift this latent transnationalism to active transnationalism along their life course. For instance, Florence actively pursuing a dual nationality for her child with a Ghanaian and British passport as a way of belonging and what it means to future transnationality of the child.

Choosing to send children back home was not necessarily done (just) out of the desire to work for money, but to fulfil that growing need for affordable and better childcare arrangement. Privatised childcare is not a preferred option for most of the migrant parents I interviewed in London. As Florence noted, 'they do not take good care of the child and it's expensive and time-consuming...Initially, I use to send my son to Ghanaian woman's place. That cost £10 but her place was too small, with poor ventilation, no play activity and lots of children. It affected my child's mental development somehow. When I started working at a Jewish care home later and had my second child, my daughter, I had free sixteen hours childcare/nursery from the government but anything beyond that hours I had to pay £54 per day...I don't make that money from work to pay this... however, even when I was paying, they do not take good care of the child as you want... my daughter developed skin rashes and she was not cleaned properly when she poo-pooed.' Thus, rather than representing children's return as a sense of abandonment by the parent, the experience of Florence, for instance, suggests a way of *reworking* motherhood and what care for a child should mean; that is something that should be personally done by the mother and affordable and not to be procured on the market. Additionally, return migration may be considered as a 'way of being' in transnational social fields. However, for Jonathan's children who have not adjusted to food and transport systems in Ghana, this can more or less be understood as a reflection of their daily lives in Ghana and an expression of being 'out of place' and rather belonging to the UK from a 'way of belonging' perspective. Moreover, the experience of children who are sent 'home' cannot be seen as homogeneous. Rather, it is clear that there are structural or political-economic drivers that affect the family as a unit. The three family experiences in this Chapter underscore the relational effect of changes in the political economy and how the transnational family's composition and connections play out. For instance, one major reason for sending children to Ghana is the unbearable childcare cost and thus children-mother relation shifts from being in one place into being separated across national borders when coping strategies are employed (Coe 2013).

Additionally, as argued by Olwig (2007) and Coe (2013), places can no longer be seen as politically defined by borders but rather the cultural phenomena are critical to meanings that we attached to places within the transnational social field (Schiller & Levitt 2004). With the practice of sending children to Ghana, it appears that there is a shift in the importance attached to the 'host' country compared to the 'origin' place. In particular, as seen in the case of Afia's family, provision of care and child-raising is considered to be better in Ghana compared to the UK (Coe 2013:24). On the other hand, Ama Duku's, active practice of *doing family* can be viewed as an orientation towards transnational social imaginaries of being together with Geraldine in London one day. The display of images – sometimes edited into a collage with pictures of her and the mother - on social occasions like Mother's Day, suggests a *way of being* together and is a sense of a transnational way of belonging and being embedded in the transnational family or social field. By using the lived-life experience of Family Three for instance, which suggests that at one point in time for Afia, Ghana becomes a destination country and the UK an origin country, while for her mother the UK is the destination and Ghana the origin country, I show in a more careful way how the movement between Ghana-UK transnational social field disrupts dominant categorisation of countries as 'host' or 'origin' places based on wealth and income indicators.

## **Conclusion**

Key benefits of the transnational approach include the possibility of simultaneously capturing everyday life experiences of both moving and non-moving subjects and understanding how familial relationships among people and topographies are maintained in periods of economic change. However, as noted by Mahler, the transnational lens may not reveal all transnational dimensions and actors (Mahler 1998). By using an ethnographic approach, the researcher is able to build trusted relationships with families that reveal consequences of political economics on issues such as access to basic needs, and the rising cost of childcare. These issues help to inform transnational practices which impact on children's mobilities and relationships. Attention is brought to human agency, as young people are emplaced in new families within transnational households. Consequently, practices within transnational households challenge the dominant construction that to be a 'good mother' or 'good child' requires a nuclear family. In truth, transnational family networks serve to protect and care for children as families negotiate political economy

constraints as children eventually recognise non-kin relations as ‘mother’ and ‘grandmother’. Further, for internal child migrants in Ghana, working and receiving remittances from overseas allows them to engage in translocal practices that highlight the globalised connection between families (Holt & Holloway 2006). These household-based practices and the materiality of the processes to survive the effects of political-economic change can be imagined as part of the topographies of social support and solidarity.

However, challenges that families may face persist despite the support of transnational family networks. Here, I agree with Cindi Katz’s argument that global capitalism has led to specific uneven development across the world, some children are emplaced in locations with limited access to resources such as healthcare or education owing to problems generated by neoliberal policies (Katz 2001).

## Chapter 6

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### Transnational Homes, Disruptions and Negotiating Interdependencies

*'In Ghana, my father's church is close to our house. After church every day we play with the children in the house. It's a big house with big rooms. Here, the rooms are small. I wish we had something like that here, I really wish'*  
(Jane,<sup>23</sup> 5–9 years old, interviewed in London).

This Chapter focuses on the housing and neighbourhood conditions of transnational Ghanaian households and how transnational children and youth experience housing realities shaped by their physical movement or material resources.

Several years after the global financial crisis, there have been reports and debates on the housing crisis and homelessness in London amid rising housing costs and difficulty faced by young people in getting access to housing. The social housing sector has equally been under pressure to provide housing. As of 1 April 2018, 1.11 million households are on local authority waiting lists (Ministry of Housing, 2019). Moreover, studies and discussions have focused on how government policy under austerity and growing neoliberal capitalism in the form of gentrification is displacing the poor and working-class families in London (Watt & Minton, 2016; Watt, 2018). Some of these economic restructuring measures under austerity include the imposition of the 'Bedroom Tax', a reduction in Housing Benefit payments for small families that have spare rooms, cutbacks in Local Housing Allowance and housing benefits, and setting a Welfare Cap<sup>24</sup>, all of which have been deemed by the government as important in reducing the social spending deficit. While earlier studies (Watt and Minton, 2016; Watt, 2018) focused on state-led gentrification and the effects of austerity on groups such as single parents, the experiences of transnational families and what the housing crisis means for transnational children and other young people who are coming of age has been not been adequately researched.

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<sup>23</sup> In 2016, I interviewed Jane, her two sisters and their mother. They all moved out of London in late 2017.

<sup>24</sup> This sets a limit for the amount of social assistance that a family may receive without consideration to other factors such as the family size (e.g. the number of children in the family and housing cost in itself).

The families interviewed had houses built in Ghana where children, including kin or non-kin members, lived with various roles that they had to perform in the house. Meanwhile, while certain families had accumulated capital by building a house in Ghana while working in the UK, they were sometimes homeless or pushed to the outer boroughs of London or places outside London. This occurred despite their attachment to London as their place of birth, work, education, or religious community, which consequently affected everyday social relations, identity construction, and transnational practices. This paradox between neoliberal forms of capital accumulation, public disinvestment in housing and social reproduction will be explored in this Chapter in relation to Ghanaian transnational households. Similarly, in discussing the constraints that certain households face, I will argue that homelessness and housing constraints experienced by families and young people are also an outcome of the increasing level of ‘financialisation’ or monetisation and privatisation of social reproduction which are key facets of neoliberal capitalism. Thus, there is a need to look beyond austerity to understand social reproduction disruptions in Ghanaian transnational households.

In this Chapter the ‘crises’ that are affecting people’s lives is mainly due to intensified neoliberalism and UK austerity policies, which began in 2010 following the events of 2007-08 global financial crisis or the United States subprime mortgage market crisis. However, the analytic connection between housing conditions in Ghana and the UK is also an effort to produce critical (counter)topographies that show neoliberalism and globalised capitalist production’s effects on housing, transnationalisation of housing and household-based social reproduction processes, including by whom and how it is accomplished.

This Chapter begins by looking at transnational housing arrangements, including the meanings behind building a house in Ghana as a homeowner while the majority of Ghanaian emigrants may be housing tenants in London or other parts of the UK. Cindy Katz’s work offers insight on how neoliberal capitalism, in the form of economic restructuring, affects children’s relationships with ‘place’, and therefore their emplacement in relation to local and global economic processes (Katz, 2004). Subsequently, I will draw on the concept of place and emplacement by Katz to explain forms of intra- and inter-generational relationships within the transnational household and the significant role that children play at different places in the maintenance of (transnational) homes. Further, I will explore the displacements

that households face and their coping strategies. By doing so, I will also establish their impact on gendered roles and household inequalities.

### **Transnational housing: the story of moving for a better life and *Bɔga Fie***

Ghanaian transnational migration has long been connected to the aspiration to move *aburokyire* [abroad], pursuing work and material resources such as buying a house overseas and building a house in Ghana while away from home. Migrants are often judged as to whether or not they had a successful migration process by relatives in Ghana according to their material assets, such as a big house to stay in during return visits or during retirement (Smith and Mazzucato, 2009). The symbolic representation of a successful migrant through housing was noticeable among Ghanaian migrants who first moved to western countries for a ‘better life’ during the 1970s and the 1980s when Ghana experienced a series of coup d’états and structural adjustment reforms, respectively. Among those who moved were also Ghanaian highlife musicians including Daddy Lumba and Nana Acheampong. In the 1990s, many Ghanaian immigrants - including highlife musicians<sup>25</sup> - returned for visit mainly from Germany and other western countries with high social and economic status. However, those who returned from Germany after ‘making it’ were popularly known as *Bɔga* (its pronunciation sounds like Hamburg, where Ghanaians lived in Germany), by way of their assets such as owning one or more big ultramodern houses built with migrant remittances, their ‘Porsche cars’ [flashy cars like Audi and Mercedes], which they had shipped a few months before their return, as well as their distinct style with baggy jeans and the latest sneakers and formal shirts with braces and baggy trousers. Houses built by migrants were referred to as *Bɔga Fie*, meaning a wealthy migrant’s house. Owners of such houses are socially respected given that a ‘big house’ portrays a successful Ghanaian migrant or returnee. Similar to the experience of British-Bangladeshi transnational children studied by Gardner (1995, 2008), Ghanaian transnational children including left-behind children, who live in *Bɔga Fie* are also accorded high social status as *Bɔga Ba* (literally meaning the son or daughter of a wealthy migrant)

In the context of Ghanaian emigration, *Bɔgas* who moved during the 1970s and the 1980s could be seen as the pioneers of Ghanaian communities, with their own subjective

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<sup>25</sup> Most of the musicians composed songs based on their migration experiences to create awareness about the opportunities and challenges of migration. To some extent, their music also targeted desperate Ghanaians encouraging them to think twice before embarking on international migration.

transnational practices, expressed in their ways of being (i.e. their social relations and practices) and belonging (i.e. practices that signal or link their identity to a country or community). Some paved the way for family and friends to come to the UK to ‘feel at home’ by offering a room, sharing their room, and finding jobs, especially in the cleaning and care industry for newly arrived people (see also Chapter 7). As a result, initial housing support from already settled Ghanaians in London was common in the narratives of all the young adults and parents interviewed for this study. Similarly, for British-Ghanaian transnational families living in southeast London, older migrants who arrived in the 1970s and 1980s worked and ‘made it’ by owning one house in London and at least one in Ghana. Some of these adult migrants helped new arrivals settle permanently, establishing and maintaining Ghanaian communities in London including Hometown and ‘Old School’ (alumni) associations where they showed solidarity and support through information sharing about needs such as housing. When I went to local Ghanaian shops in London, ‘room available’ and ‘job vacancy’ were common notices posted on the front glass of church and community centre noticeboards. Sometimes, housing information was also shared on hometown community WhatsApp group pages. The various virtual (e.g. WhatsApp) and non-virtual (e.g. churches) social fields of connection and solidarity were important reasons why people preferred to be in London despite rising living costs and reports of racism and violence.

For younger British-Ghanaian transnational migrants, their housing story is rather different. In comparison to older migrants, these young people are experiencing economic and social deprivation due to poor employment conditions and rising housing costs in London. As I will discuss later in this Chapter, most of them are unable to secure their own accommodation when they are older. Unlike their parents who are attached to London and Ghana through housing, the children of migrants are ‘leaving’ London due to the precarious housing situation. Similarly, for older migrants such as parents, homeownership in Ghana is a major part of the return migration process. As Kwesi, a 36-year-old male information technology consultant living in London, noted: ‘I will definitely go back and thus building a house in Ghana is one of the preparations that I need to put in place for my return.’ Conversely, for young people, housing is linked to temporary returns (e.g. holiday or family visits) and places where they will stay in Ghana to get to know their relatives as part of constructing their Ghanaian identity. Similarly, other migrants, including both relatives and



non-Ghanaians, live in these houses which contribute to widened and strengthened social networks for Ghanaian transnational migrants. It is important to mention that houses are often acquired in Accra due to its proximity to Ghana's international airport and the fact that the rate of such properties appreciate over time.

While some Ghanaians may own a house in Ghana and the UK, for most first-generation migrants there is a paradox of 'being a landlord in Ghana' and 'being a tenant while overseas', as captured in the lyrics of *Sansa Akroma*, a song by one of Ghana's hiplife artists Amakye Dede (Dede, 1990). The song depicts the everyday life conditions of Ghanaians abroad in lyrics that allude to the paradoxes of migration: 'Ghanaian migrants struggle to find accommodation and it's not because they do not have a house in Ghana/they desire to find work and money overseas/poverty can make a respectable Ghanaian a nonentity in another country.'<sup>26</sup> The significance of this old song in contemporary Ghanaian migration trajectories was noted by one of my adult respondents, Asante, a 36-year-old male cab driver living in London: 'if houses could be moved from Ghana, all migrants would come with their houses just like their suitcases.'

Bearing in mind Ghanaian transnational migration and its link to housing or *Bɔga Fie*, it seems that the housing debate has predominantly focused on adult migrants and their investment in housing as part of their return migration strategies. Therefore, there is a need to understand how young people are affected by housing, which forms a major part of both migration and growing into adulthood. How do transnational fields and the families embedded in them make sense of their different encounters with housing (including constraints) at different places? Securing accommodation is a major aspect of coming of age, but how do young people negotiate the growing housing crisis in London? What can we learn about social reproduction as related to housing from a transnational perspective? To respond to these questions, I will draw on two theoretical views, *place* and *emplacement*, used in Katz's work to analyse not only the physical dimensions of housing, but also the social connections and the material differences that may result in deprivation, exclusion and inequality between people and the places they live (Katz, 2004).

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<sup>26</sup> This quote is an English translation of the song which is originally in Twi. The transnational was done by Michael Boampong for this dissertation to reflect the meaning of a portion of the lyrics.

## **The nature of houses, places, and negotiating social relations in Ghana**

Places where migrant houses are located within the transnational social field have both physical and social connotations. In Ghana, most low-income families may live together with other kin and non-kin members in a ‘family house’, commonly known as a compound house. The house is a large U-shaped structure with about seven to ten rooms and a shared open courtyard. Those from affluent or middle-class backgrounds live in walled estate houses with about two to three rooms, often without extended family members such as uncles or aunts and grandparents who can be considered a burden on material resources. With respect to the ‘family house’ setting, the compound is often used as a place for cooking, usually in homes with little or no kitchen space. After school, it is common to see boys playing soccer and other local games such as *pilolo* (a hide-and-seek game) in the compound due to the few play areas being used by adults. Girls often play *ampe* (a jump, clap and a foot-step forward game) after they have finished house chores. The structure of the house affects peer interaction. Unlike children in enclosed ‘estate houses’, those living in open compounds have a greater likelihood of interaction with other people including their friends in the neighbourhood.

Moreover, children benefit from the care of extended family members beyond their blood parents. The experience of John (20–24 years, unemployed graduate, Accra) typically reveals inter-generational dependences and what he noted to be the ‘good side’ of living in a compound house setting:

*‘After school, my mum takes care of anything I need. Like if I have to eat or do my homework. If she can’t, my uncle will do it for me [or] my sister or sometimes grandma... you are never alone because someone is always home — even if your grandma is not at home someone is always there to take care of you. If they cook, they will feed you; if they are going to school, they will give you money to go to school. Since I was a kid if I [couldn’t do the laundry] myself, she [would tell me] to bring [my] clothes to wash. If mum cooks rice today and you don’t want to eat rice today, and someone in the house has cooked banku and you want to eat that, you can go and ask.’*

Bearing the ‘good side’ in mind, it was also noted that when a child is ‘living in a family home... everyone can punish you if you do wrong... anyone can send you on an

errand for instance to buy water', and for the children this was considered as an unpleasant aspect of living with extended family members given that it extended their responsibilities.

For middle-class and wealthy families in 'estate houses', when parents travelled within Ghana, arrangements were made for them to travel to live with a kin or non-kin adult or the adults were invited to the children's house to stay over and provide care needs (e.g. food, bathing, sweeping the house at dawn, locking the doors at night, etc.), especially when the children were below 20 years of age. That being said, in houses where there were older children above 20, they would take on the primary tasks (e.g. cooking and washing) around the house and negotiate roles (e.g. short distance errands) with younger siblings while their parents were away.

Moreover, for children, including left-behind children or children who had been sent to Ghana for foster care, a sense of togetherness in their everyday lives was reported. As Mercy, a teenager in junior high school student in Kumasi noted:

*'[I am] friends with all six children in their house... we all go to school or church together and [do] the same things together. We all leave the house together... we all walk home together. We learn together, we play together, we live together and go to school together.'*

Similarly, the proximity of children's houses to school and travelling to school together was considered safe enough to not require adult supervision as noted by John, an unemployed graduate in his early 20s living in Accra:

*'The school was a walking distance from our house, so we were not going with any adult. I was nine years [old] and the school was about 10–15 minutes from our home so we [walked] together, and we [met] other classmates so we [could] all go together.'*

By living in the same house or neighbourhood, children's lives were compared and the children in the wider community were all expected to perform well academically. For instance, Annarina (10–19 years), who was born in London but returned to live in Ghana for three years when she was 9 years old noted: 'What I disliked about going to school with people in the same house is [that] my mother always compares my results with my cousin's and criticises [me] for not doing well at school.'

Furthermore, in Ghana, it is typical for children to circulate between the houses of both relatives and non-relatives. Having ‘two houses’ in a place where relatives including uncles and parents are located offered several options for children. This was equally important when considering social reproduction processes, where it is considered that while biological parents contribute to the child’s genetics, society shapes the child to be responsible and a good citizen, as children get to know various people (e.g. aunts, uncles, adults or community leaders) and institutions (e.g. school, church) throughout life. Moreover, the number of options, whether greater or lesser, are also evident as children move between different places. Within the neighbourhoods where relative’s houses are closer, it became clearer that children had the freedom to move between houses as noted in John’s interview response:

*‘Sometimes [after school], [I would pass by] my uncle's place and eat before [going home] or just stay there and then in the evening he [would] take me home, so it was fun — I had two homes then. Sometimes my grandma [gave] me money for school but when I [went to] my uncle's place, he [would] also give me extra money, so I [used] his money to buy extra snacks or juice.’*

### **Transnational emplacement, locality and inequalities**

Young people’s *emplacement* can also be a consequence of global processes, particularly the places where young people live and their position in the household or the transnational social field. One way of exploring the role of children in *Bɔga Fie* is through social reproduction processes which have also been captured in the work of Cindy Katz on ‘vagabond capitalism’ (2001, 2004). Historically, parents or adults in this study supported their relatives, including their wives, husbands, or younger siblings, to move to countries including Germany, the UK, and the USA in the 1990s and 2000s. This resulted in a situation where there were no longer as many next of kin adult relatives of migrant parents in Ghana to take care of *Bɔga Fie* as there used to be. Consequently, older children of transnational migrants are bearing the responsibility of taking care of completed housing or supervising construction sites at uncompleted housing projects in Ghana. Here, it is important to note that, as discussed in Chapter 4, some of these children have come of age after being left behind by migrant parents with the hope of reuniting later but have become immobile amid rising immigration restrictions (Veale and Andres, 2014). Hence they

become the people to rely on when parents need assistance with their building projects as they have ‘come of age’. Most of these young people in Ghana and their relatives overseas are connected through transnational practices such as calling and exchanging images about *Bɔga Fie* conditions.

Despite the interconnected nature of transnational families, the *critical topographies* between places where they are *emplaced* within the transnational social field revealed uneven social relations between boys and girls in taking care of the *Bɔga Fie* from a social reproduction perspective (Katz, 2001). This form of unequal emplacement depends on existing age and gendered norms. My interview with young caretakers based on time-use diaries of respondents in Ghana suggested intra-generational gender and age hierarchies were significant in taking care of *Bɔga Fie*: For non-migrant adolescents and young people with relatives in London, I discovered that girls’ activities included weeding around the house and other daily chores including fetching water to clean the house, washing utensils and clothing, as well as cooking. Conversely, boys drew water from a borehole in the house (if available), reported and supervised building defects for repairs, and collected and deposited or transferred rent from tenants in Ghana to homeowners in London in what could be termed as a reverse remittance. For instance, John noted:

*‘I do take care of my uncle’s house because he is not here... I collect the rent. Sometimes I clean the house when my sister travels. I also draw from the borehole every morning. Today, for instance, I woke up around 7:00 a.m. to fetch water for my [little] sister and went back to sleep. Eventually I woke up at 9:30 a.m.’*

Michael: *‘How do you feel about this?’*

John: *‘Drawing water from the borehole [requires] a lot of energy. It’s good [that] I am in the house. I am almost like an ‘efiewura’ [landlord]. It’s always good to have a man in the house to help when needed. Last week, for instance, I had a tiresome day. I went to our other house to meet our tenants. We spent over two hours agreeing on the tenancy agreement. I came home tired and dirty.’*

Moreover, it appeared that boys had more time to engage in leisure activities in the house. It was therefore common to see young men gathered together in the house playing

local games such as *Dame*, *Ludo*, and *Oware*, or watching the European League while young women performed house chores:

*'After having my breakfast, I proceeded to watch movies on my computer and [watched] the TV for the rest of the day. I will watch the football match later'* (John, 20-24 years, unemployed, Accra).

In many instances when it came to domestic chores or housework, most young men were not the main duty bearers or did not take full responsibility but felt they could 'help':

*'I had to help my sister with cleaning the house and later on I did help her with her project which took all night. I slept around 12:30 a.m. and was very exhausted'* (Kevin, 20–24 years, high school graduate, Accra).

In Ghanaian society, gendered responsibility in the house is often reproduced through adult's instruction or control on what boys and girls should do (Wong, 2006). For instance, when I interviewed John's uncle in London and asked why John was the one to deal with the rent, he responded that 'girls are likely to spend the money... [they have more] needs than men... if care is not taken [she will spend it] or a woman will give it to someone who is in need. It's just like when you give a woman "chopmoney"<sup>27</sup> for the house - it's never enough.' Similarly, religious teachings also suggest that women are weaker and that men are stronger. Thus, John's uncle felt his nephew's masculinity would be needed to 'deal with unruly building contractors and tenants.' Essentially, despite being in the UK, transnational gender inequalities were reproduced across borders and within the transnational social field. As a researcher and transnational migrant myself, I was able to confirm these highly gendered notions when, in 2018, I sent remittances to my mother for a building project and my father queried my mother saying, 'Is it a woman that builds a house when there is a man around?' (Field notebook, 2018).

Caretaking or housekeeping work by left-behind relatives is unpaid, though property owners may remit money to these young people when requested for their upkeep or needs such as school fees. I discovered that most young family members in such *Bɔga Fie* do not pay rent and sometimes may either pay bills for the house including water and electricity if

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<sup>27</sup> In Ghana, 'chopmoney' is money that the husband usually gives to the wife for daily food provision. The term was popularly used by adult first generation migrants in London and the USA during research interactions in London and the USA.

they are working or for rent if unemployed, depending on the homeowner. Therefore, this arrangement is also dependent on reciprocity. It is worth mentioning that since the house is owned by his uncle, John feels a sense of obligation to his maternal uncle to take care of it as if it were his own mother's property due to the matrilineal inheritance arrangement in Akan culture (Wong, 2006).

In contrast to the relatively cheaper means by which working-class Ghanaian migrant's parents are able to acquire a house with their remittance, most struggle to find accommodation in the UK. For these migrants in London, it was clear that global capital was having an effect on their local neighbourhood and their *place* in London. As certain locations in south-east London were experiencing disinvestment or cutbacks in spending on children's places amid rising knife crime, parents such as Edward, a 36-year-old technician living in London, even noted he preferred having a girl to a boy because 'most often black boys are victims of knife crime incidents'. Similarly, for young people who have come of age as transnational children in the UK, Katz's view resonated with how their parents came to the UK and were involved in all forms of work in London — from cleaning to construction (that is to say, predominately low-paid work) — but are living in areas that are experiencing disinvestment in education, social housing, police security etc. Many young people who lived in London and have come of age 'wished' to have their own house, but lived in places where the cost of 'vagabond capitalism' (Katz, 2001). could be felt (e.g. Lambeth, Elephant and Castle, and Lewisham), and where jobs were insecure and low paid, gentrification had increased the cost of housing, and council homes were hard to come by for large families where boys and girls needed separate rooms. In fact, a recent report characterised neighbourhoods such as Lambeth, Southwark, and Croydon, where some of my working-class respondents lived, as some of the ten most dangerous areas in the UK (Olsen, 2018).

Many of the transnational children in London often compared their experiences in Ghana to criticise conditions in London while emphasising the ideal conditions necessary for children. That being said, children still recognised their houses and neighbourhoods as 'good places' because they had friends and family nearby, as noted by Ophelia, a 5-9 year-old who lived in Ghana for 4 years and then moved to London:

*'My favourite place was Auntie Joyce's house. She's been living there for like six years and my favourite place was there because she has three girls like*

*my mum. We've not been to their bedroom before. I think I've been there once. The room is often crowded.'*

### **Emplacement and time: transitions from childhood to adulthood**

'Everything is a matter of time' was a typical saying used by young people during research interviews. While this reflected their challenges, expectations, plans and hopes over time, it also reflected the time dimension and temporality of young people housing trajectories. As young people go through different stages in their lives, their emplacement in relation to time and place is equally affected by gender and cultural expectations to markers of adulthood. In the context of transnational British-Ghanaians, childhood and adulthood constructions are likely to be affected by local and global processes of crisis, and therefore the relationship between emplacement and life course transitions needs to be considered.

Marriage, which is often referred to as part of the process of 'settling down', is one of the critical junctures in life regarding expectations of both relatives and non-relatives in Ghanaian society and transnational communities. However, moving out of a parental home or finding a personal house, whether rented or owned, is considered a major marker in readiness for marriage. That being said, some differences exist across transnational geographies and gender: in Ghana, it is 'normal' for a girl to stay with her parents even as an adult, albeit with constrained autonomy in their everyday lives. It is common for most girls to move out when they have found a job or when they are married. However, for British-Ghanaians, transnational marriage does not serve as the basis for moving, but rather the desire for autonomy in their day-to-day lives, including choosing to leave and return to the house without parental questioning. For instance, Amanpene (25–35 years, female, international development worker, London) commented: 'My [relatives] in Ghana don't understand why I have chosen to live on my own in my house... but I want to have my own place, freedom, and privacy'. That being said, girls feel pressured to marry 'on time' between the ages of 24 and 29 years after school without concerns about owning their house or 'space'. From the age of 30, concerns that they are 'delaying' or 'may not be able to give birth in later years' can be voiced if they are not married. On the other hand, there are no age requirements for boys getting married and it is considered acceptable even if it happens later in life. The intention for boys to get married has been viewed as something to do after completing school, getting a job, moving out of their parental home, or getting their own house — even at the age of 40. Thus, transitions into womanhood are constructed around the



normative trajectory of marriage, while for men it is marked by multiple social expectations including material resources (e.g. property) and marriage.

In both the UK and Ghana, young men are expected to have housing or accommodation before they can gain the acceptance of a woman or the woman's family for marriage. As Yawson (20–24 years, unemployed high school graduate, Ashanti Region, Ghana) noted, if 'you are unemployed and you are staying with your parents, no lady will accept your proposal... it's difficult for men to be men these days'. This quote echoes the experience of young people in Rwanda whom Sommers (2011) researched and found to have been 'stuck' due to lack of certain markers of male adulthood. Moreover, material expectations were also emphasised among church marriage committees run by adults, as young men were asked about their accommodation status before marriages were performed. Although it was perceived that young people had the right to marry with or without parental consent, parents felt their involvement through asking questions was also critical for 'mutual respect and to ensure good acceptance of the person and recognition of the relevance of strong family ties and inheritance'. Moreover, Ghanaian parents believe that sharing accommodation with others is likely to affect the privacy of couples and cause other marital issues. In essence, for young men, *moving out* and finding a place represents a key component of masculinity and identity construction as a married 'man' and an 'adult'. On the other hand, not having these symbolic material resources means that young people are trapped in between childhood and adulthood (Wells, 2009).

### **Shared housing and shared everyday living**

Sharing living spaces are also common among working-class Ghanaian transnational families in the UK following experiences of rising housing costs and the need for affordable accommodation. That being said, certain practices significant to children's lives were noticeable considering rising social reproduction costs, especially among single young mothers and other young people.

First of all, to underscore the temporality of shared housing arrangements for migrants, it is important to note again that, prior to moving from Ghana to live in the UK, young Ghanaian immigrants stay with relatives (siblings, parents, uncles and aunties) and non-kin acquaintances (friends) upon arrival. This has been considered as an 'immediate', 'normal' and 'best' option given that most of them have little economic capital or social

networks to negotiate the constraints relating to housing abroad. For instance, Linda (25–35 years, former caregiver) noted that:

*'I did not have money and a job to pay rent so I stayed with [my] uncle. When I found a job, I moved out of [his] place... later on he helped me find a house through one of his friends. But the cost was too high.'*

Consequently, shared living with relatives is a way of reducing the cost of living while taking care of other daily needs such as food and transport.

Shared living is also common among young single mothers. Their everyday lives reveal that shared living relationships entail shared obligations, shared values and shared resources. For instance, Florence<sup>28</sup> (36+ years, nurse, single parent of a 5–9-year-old girl, London) rented a spare room to a student who was not a relative. She stated that she preferred a female student because Ghanaian men 'often don't want to do house chores and [feel] uncomfortable when there is a woman in the house... they feel the woman must do the housework such as cleaning... as a nurse when I go to work I [finish] late but the other lady [co-tenant] is able to pick up my daughter from school, feed her and help her with her [homework]'. Hence, there is a responsibility of care, cleaning and cooking that is shared or passed on to other people such as students who may equally need affordable housing. This is also rooted in her struggle to balance her paid labour with unpaid labour. While preferences for young women in shared housing reinforces gender stereotypes regarding gender norms and women's roles as carers in domestic settings, this experience indicates that amid the state's welfare cuts and precarious financial situations (e.g. low wages), *other* women in shared housing, particularly younger women (e.g. female students) are likely to bear the cost of social reproduction (Katz, 2001; Parreñas, 2005a; Elson, 2010; Cox, 2013b). It is also worth mentioning that these young co-tenants also pay rent. Although their rent is lower, it nevertheless contributes to reducing the main occupant's financial burden. This trend equally reveals the financialisation of social reproduction results from the paradox between accumulating capital and social reproduction processes (Katz, 2001; Elson, 2010; 2012a).

Shared living is not only limited to sharing spaces in a single house, but also extends to shared practices within a neighbourhood. For instance, Edith (36+ years, stay-at-home

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<sup>28</sup> Florence also moved to Nottingham in 2018. I first interviewed her in 2016 at her residence in a privately rented property with her daughter aged 5–7.

mother of three children, London), Ben's mother, has a close British-Zambian friend who lives in their neighbourhood. In my interactions with Elijah and his mother I discovered the following shared arrangements related to school and their care:

Ben (9 years old, Edith's eldest son): *'My aunt took me to school with my cousins. She lives in that place with the open window (pointing through the window to an apartment).'*

Edith (Ben's mother): *'Yes, it's my friend who sent them to school. We rotate so when she sends them in the morning then I will go and [pick them up] — my children and hers — in the afternoon. Sometimes her children stay with me after school or my children go there... my youngest does not want to bring them to our house because they play a lot together.'*

It is noticeable that shared practices can contribute to multi-cultural network formation among persons from different countries and also results in children's formation of networks through play and friendship. Children are encouraged to call adults embedded in their networks 'aunty' or 'uncle' although they are not legally related. This practice is partly to inculcate respect for elders in children and other young people through the use of honorific titles. However, through shared practices (e.g. children's work and remittances exchange), emotional and familial connections may be forged.

In addition to co-sharing providing a coping strategy in dealing with the challenges of childcare, especially for young single parents, it has also been found that house share arrangements are vital in dealing with loneliness and homesickness that most Ghanaian emigrants face while in *obinmanso* (someone's country) or *aburokyire* (abroad). For example, Florence said that 'sometimes [she and her co-tenant] chat while having dinner together at home. It's better to come home and share how your day went with someone, otherwise loneliness can kill you — especially when you are single'. Therefore, the social and financial benefits make shared accommodation with short-term occupants such as students and young house owners a more preferable option.

Despite the benefits of sharing, including reduced living costs and shared domestic work, a number of challenges have been highlighted. For example, respondents noted conflicts with relatives and non-relatives over certain values and sharing material resources.

Isaac<sup>29</sup> (25–35 years, a train assistant used to live in a privately rented shared property in South London):

*‘Once I fought with the elderly woman because she complained that I did not clean the sink well, and at one point I also had to [make a complaint to] my next door [neighbour] because [his music was] was making too much noise every day.’*

It is often assumed that the ‘home’ or a ‘house’ is a private space. Yet, one of the challenges that people experienced when sharing was their privacy. Sharers who shared a bedroom often felt that privacy was not possible. For instance, Collins (30 years), whose roommate was in a relationship with a girl, noted his ‘discomfort’ when his roommate’s girlfriend was in their shared room. Consequently, intragenerational relationships are built through sharing but can also be hindered at different stages of life when people form other relationships and at the same time value privacy.

Different forms of negotiation were observed in shared transnational households. Privacy constraints also affected transnational practices such as phone call conversations between relatives in the UK and Ghana. For instance, there were points where co-tenants in houses that had about seven occupants did not want others to hear their conversations about their personal family matters in Ghana. In fact, Green and McCarthy (2015) suggested that shared living arrangements can leave some tenants vulnerable and, for certain immigrants, they are at risk of being exposed by others if, for instance, they are undocumented. In dealing with privacy concerns, sometimes the bathroom/toilet served as a private space, or tenants had to go outside the house. This indicates the challenge in achieving privacy in shared houses. Other strategies include timing private conversations during periods where there are fewer housemates in the house as they may have gone to work during the day.

In shared households, while the living room and the kitchen could be considered as a place where household members can spend time together watching TV or eating, the living room in particular was often converted into a place to sleep at night. That being said, shared time and activities were found to be common in the kitchen where household members often gathered at night to share a meal after work. In most cases, despite not being related, such

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<sup>29</sup> In 2018, Isaac moved out of London to Peterborough in Cambridgeshire with his wife and two young daughters aged between 5 and 9 years due to the constraints faced with housing and work in London.

co-tenants demonstrated certain normative family living arrangements. In particular, every year during the summer, one person cooked food for the whole household which was not necessarily a local Ghanaian dish. For instance, Sylvanus, a Ghanaian who lived in Italy with his children 15 years before moving to the UK in 2010, stated: ‘I am the best cook in the house. I often cook Italian meals when it’s my turn’. This seasonal food ritual emphasises a collective identity (and sometimes multicultural practices when another cuisine was cooked), family life and family cohesion among members of the household. In fact, the work of Hutchinson et al (2007) has emphasised how family rituals generate a sense of being ‘a family.’ Thus, through these activities, household members in the UK developed and deepened intimate relationships of friendship and care for one another with regard to aspects such as health, childbirth and bereavement.

Intimacy in relationships is also evident in how households express a sense of solidarity and *familyhood*. The local term *abusua*, which means family, was commonly used in conversations to show concern, compassion and solidarity for each other when co-tenants may not have their blood relatives around. For instance, Lord noted: ‘All of us here are far from home, Ghana, and our family... we treat each other like brothers and sisters... we are like a family — some of our housemates have no papers. Sometime ago immigration police came to knock on our door, but because I know some people here don’t have *nkrataa* [legal documents], I did not open [the door] because [that would] allow them to arrest my brother — you have to be your brother’s keeper’. In addition to providing shared spaces and practices, the social network and symbolic capital of belonging to a secured family for protection are also a means of resisting manifestations of a ‘hostile environment’ where citizens or landlords<sup>30</sup> have been interpellated as immigration security subjects (Government of UK, 2014; Bowling and Westenna, 2018)

### **Coping with the housing crisis amid financialisation and further disruption in social reproduction**

The expectations of most young people, including working-class young people, are often constrained by multiple factors including low income, rising house prices as well as the increasing cost of securing a house, which is currently a key dimension of capitalism in London. I noted earlier Rosemary’s comment about a bank’s billboard with the slogan ‘there

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<sup>30</sup> Under the UK Immigration Act 2014, any landlord that rents accommodation to an undocumented migrant will be penalised. The criminal sanctions were also extended to the Immigration Act 2016.

is no place like home... helping home buyers for over 160 years'. She had remarked: 'they have a picture of a young person on the signboard but how many have the money to buy a house?'

While Rosemary's father noted that he was not concerned about her being 'stuck' in his house, I discovered that her presence in the house was equally important for the household's domestic work due to her mother's full-time job as a nurse. She contributed to daily household tasks including cooking and cleaning the house, since her mother was not in the house as the typical 'housewife' that is present in most Ghanaian households. While it is assumed that often gendered norms such as women carrying out domestic work have ended (Manuh, 1999), they have a tendency to persist when young adults are dependent on their parents. Therefore, as long as young girls are 'stuck' in their parent's house, their independence or autonomy is difficult to achieve and gendered norms continue to be reinforced, as noted earlier in my discussions on *emplacement* in Ghana.

Moreover, given the unreliability of access to social housing, many young people from middle-class families expect their parents to support their housing arrangements by providing for them financially as noted by Rosemary:

*'For someone like me, if I was buying on my own, it [would] be nice if my mum and dad could help me but they wouldn't.'*

This desire for help is common due to accumulated debt from education in addition to poor income as noted earlier. Unlike other young people from wealthy families whose parents may offer an "extra couple of grand"... [for the] mortgage deposit' as noted by Heath and Calvert (2013:1128), the young people in my study did not have any form of financial assistance from 'the bank of mum and dad' for their mortgage deposits.

Of those who do not receive support from their parents or do not have parents who own a house, most never imagine becoming homeless. In the event of homelessness, relatives are the immediate source of support as noted in a respondent's experience below:

*'The whole eviction was a surprise to me... like you are in the house and have a knock on the door being told you have to leave the house, and I was like, "I have been living here for eight years. What do you mean I have to leave? ". When we were evicted, we spent some time living in my grandmother's living room [sleeping on] a mattress on the floor, which was*

*unfortunate. Imagine if she was not there?’ (Louis, 20–24 years, a university graduate who was undertaking a one-year unpaid internship. Since then, he secured a job with a housing charity organisation in London).*

Assistance from the local government social housing services can be received in some cases. However, several children complained about the poor conditions of the rooms and overcrowding among large families as noted below:

*‘We got a place in north-east London, a two-bedroom apartment which had mould and [rubbish] and a lot of things in it that were not working properly. But my mother did not have much choice, so she had to take it’ (Jane).*

*‘The council gave us a temporary one-bedroom accommodation in a hostel in a dingy place in west London, with three beds in one room being shared with people from other places. It is an awful place and you are in the midst of others who do not have housing — including people who have been to prison for drugs (drug dealers), so there is real danger living in some of these places’ (Louis).*

Moreover, as the process of financialisation deepens, certain poor families experience discrimination from private property owners who perceive them as high-risk people:

*‘It took eight months of searching and [we] found it very difficult because a lot of privately rented accommodation [landlords] don’t accept tenants who receive benefits from the government. If the government supports you to pay your rent, they will not even consider you. They usually put “no DSS” (Department for Social Security) — you see it on online with adverts. These property owners get to know this by asking you to send them your paycheck and, fair enough they need to know whether you get paid for work but, if you are receiving assistance from the council, they will not take you because they [think that you will pay the rent]’ (Louis).*

Therefore, young people in poor and low-income families that depend on welfare are highly vulnerable to discrimination in the housing landscape (Hoolachan *et al.*, 2017). I later learned that this experience of discrimination motivated Louis to work with a housing

charity organisation that supports people affected by homelessness in order to understand housing policies.

Families that are unable to cope with living in small council house rooms and the rising costs of living in London, especially those with younger children between the ages of seven and ten, feel that reproduction costs can only be met by living at the margins of cities (Meillassoux, 1981). Consequently, some of them moved outside of London to places such as Kent, Essex, Coventry, Birmingham, Peterborough, Nottingham, and Swindon. This therefore reveals a paradox between production and reproduction: living in London with the city benefiting from their migrant labour, yet experiencing precarious and vulnerable conditions due to the rising costs of living in London (Katz, 2001).

Inability to pay rent and subsequent eviction, as well as moving out of London due to rising house prices, has resulted in separation from both kin and non-kin social acquaintances. Consequently, this has caused disruptions to inter-generational emplaced social reproduction processes with implications for the wellbeing of younger children. For instance, there have been incidents where older children who help their younger siblings have been unable to move out with them:

Alex (10–19 years, male, high school student and Louis' younger brother):  
*'When [Louis was living] at home with me in London, by the time I [got] home, he [would already] be there. He [would] ask me to take an hour to relax and do my homework and [would] prepare food for me, help me with my school assignment and play with me.'*

Louis: *'My mum is working full-time and that also means that when [my brother] finishes school, and no one will be [in the house]. He is by himself now and he sometimes eats the worst foods like pizza and chicken nuggets. I feel concerned about his unhealthy eating. Actually, having no one at home to play with is bad as television games can be bad.'*

In the above quote, it is also clear that Louis is aware of the disruptions in social reproduction and its negative impact on his brother and is thus ready to also take on an adult or parental role to support his brother. This included cooking which was an important dimension of his transition from childhood into adulthood. In this case, gendered norms that



women should cook were reshaped through the necessity of the younger sibling having to be cared for by the older brother.

Moving out of London also affects young people's social relationships with friends and can create identity issues. Unlike London, which is a multicultural city that possesses certain kinds of cultural capital (e.g. multicultural diversity in people, food, churches, schools etc.) that can be accessed by British-Ghanaian families, certain places outside London were considered as 'very white'. For example, Isaac, who moved to Peterborough, stated that the children were '[stared] at too much' and often asked 'where [they were] from'. 'Asking my child where she is from is like [saying that] she does not belong here.' Moreover, moving also affects children's relationships with their social network of family and friends that they had formed while in London. This was evident in the experience of Afia (10–19 years, girl, first interviewed in London in 2016), who left London for Nottingham. During her last day at school, her friends gave her 'goodbye cards' but she complained: 'I will miss my best friends. I wonder when next I will wear my Ghanaian dress on a multicultural day if I am leaving school in London'.

Young people also expressed this threat to their social network and how leaving the city was likely to affect their livelihood and sense of belonging to London. This was the case for Louis and his family, as he noted below:

*'The council sent us outside London to Birmingham where we got housed. This did not make sense, because London is where we have been living since. My mum came here when she was young. My brother and I were born here [in London] — why Birmingham? Our families are here, our jobs are here, and it does not make sense just to uproot us and move us to a new area.'*

## **Conclusion**

Children and young people's relationship to others, including their friends and extended family who may be living in their house or within their neighbourhood, is critical to their wellbeing. In essence, significant relatives within the family and the community at large in local areas are expected to share the burden of providing care and socialising opportunities for children in order for them to become responsible adults and citizens.

Young people's everyday lives in relation to housing, and the construction of a sense of home, reveal how their emplacement within the transnational social field is affected by

gender and cultural norms. As boys and girls grow up into young men and women, they encounter social expectations to follow certain life course trajectories such as owning a place or marriage, which are experienced differently with respect to their gender, culture, and location. From a transnational perspective, some of these expectations may be reinforced by transnational practices across boundaries and gendered expectations of domestic work in maintaining transnational houses.

Homeownership is a critical aspect of young people's life transitions as well as their status and autonomy as an adult. Katz's work in relation to emplacement and social reproduction offers useful insight into how young people's lives and the ability of their families and communities to reproduce themselves can be affected by neoliberal capitalism — or to use her term 'vagabond capitalism' — across various 'critical topographies' (2001). While these conceptual approaches are plausible (as noted in this Chapter), it becomes clear that, when explored from a life course, the effects of neoliberal capitalism — including monetisation, gradual withdrawal by the government from the social housing sector and privatisation — are affecting young people's aspirations to 'move out', own their own place and achieve autonomy. The experiences of young people who have come of age suggest that are 'stuck' in their parent's homes is increasingly common. Consequently, this reinforces generational and gender inequalities since having their own home, whether through renting or buying, can enable them to escape the effects of highly gendered roles and patriarchy.

Low-income families that are unable to cope with the rising costs of housing are likely to experience eviction. In addition, they are highly vulnerable to discrimination due to their dependence on social assistance from the government as well as the growing financialisation and privatisation of housing.

While transnational families are vulnerable to the housing crisis amid rising housing costs and the government's declining social housing assistance, monetisation and the criminalisation of those renting accommodation to undocumented migrants also demonstrate a sense of reciprocity, solidarity and agency. New forms of homeownership and social reproduction are evolving amid competing demands regarding childcare and housework. The emerging forms of housing include low-income young people living with other people, shared living and shared practices. Consequently, in some cases, localised 'care chain' practices where childcare is being passed on to other young people, especially young educated women, can be found (Hochschild, 2000). These shared housing strategies have

contributed to building new social support networks. This solidarity and such supportive reciprocal arrangements can be viewed as women's strategies to reclaim the commodified nature of childcare in the market back to the domestic space (Cox, 2013a). Additionally, shared housing strategies, family support networks and certain household rituals cater to migrants' emotional and economic needs, as well as reducing security risks associated with undocumented migration status. Furthermore, building houses in Ghana and generating economic capital through reverse remittances has also become a common coping strategy for migrant parents, although transnational children do not have similar transnational housing capital.

Transnational children and their parents experience further physical movement which impacts their identities as well as their relationships to places and social relations. Such movement includes: moving or temporarily staying with a social network of relatives including parents or extended family members during a personal housing crisis (e.g. eviction); and moving back and forth between London and the margins of the city to access housing while also needing access to cultural capital and certain material social resources in the city where they once lived. These movements equally affect relationships to places and people, but also highlight some of the means by which families have to manage or maintain social relationships from a distance while integrating into new societies where children may feel like an outsider. Moreover, from a historical and cultural capital standpoint, it can be argued that the transnational relationship between Ghana and London, where most Ghanaians prefer to live when arriving in the UK due to its social network and cultural capital, is changing. As noted earlier, the children in this study expressed a sense of belonging to London and feeling like an 'outsider' in other places. With children and other young people leaving London, this is likely to affect the continuation of social reproduction processes. For instance, raising a child in a multicultural city like London allows families to access a variety of food and develop their language skills while interacting with other Ghanaians at various social spaces (e.g. churches). Similarly, forms of cultural capital for building Ghanaian identities and networks may be non-existent at the margins of the city. While it is clear that British-Ghanaian transnational families in London demonstrate or maintain translocal practices and relationships, questions that are beyond the scope of this research but are worth exploring in the future include how people who have relocated to the margins of the city create, maintain and exchange cultural capital. Similarly, examining how

new Ghanaian communities outside London deal with social reproduction and material social practices over generations would be worth exploring over time. Are there any alternatives to creating and sustaining capital on the margins? How can social services respond to the social risks (e.g. loss of social networks and cultural capital) associated with relocation?

As already noted, British-Ghanaian transnational children maintain ties with Ghana through short-term visits to Ghana. During their visits, they live in *Bɔga Fie* or houses built by migrant parents. Reinforcing the salience of a life course perspective in research, parents who have built homes in Ghana choose to relocate to these homes during their retirement. Therefore, depending on existing inter-generational relationships, one can assume that transnational practices (e.g. visiting or calling their parents in Ghana) will be maintained by British-Ghanaian transnational children as a result of relocation.

## Chapter 7

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### **‘Everywhere feels like home’: transnational neoliberal subjects negotiating the future**

In the last four decades, globalised capitalism and the drive towards neoliberalism which was associated with the Thatcher and Reagan governments of the UK and US respectively has become a major research area for understanding households and the political economy. The gradual demise of social welfare in the face of neoliberalism has reconfigured the household to take on the burden of caring for itself, thereby increasing insecurity, reducing leisure time, and greater reliance on global capitalism’s commodified and privatised services for care work and childhood.

The ‘neoliberal household’ that has to bear the cost of household reproduction therefore encouraged all household members to work outside the domestic setting and bring back wages in order to reduce the burden or the cost of social reproduction on a few people. Working outside the home could imply migration as noted earlier on in Chapter 4. In most cases, movements have intensified middle-class lifestyles in developing countries, including dependence on other people, especially the poor and working-class, for care work. Similarly, such burdens also often fall on women or are redistributed among younger children, especially older girls as noted in Chapter 5 of this thesis. The relationship between globalised capitalist production and migration has also been an important area of inquiry in transnational migration studies. Geographers and sociologists examining labour migration effects of globalised capitalist production have emphasised unpaid domestic labour and exploitation as its hallmarks (Katz, 2001; Parreñas, 2001). Moreover, neoliberal reforms impact on childhoods and social reproduction processes across geographic scales is analysed in the work of Katz (2004) and Waters (2012). Scholars who focus on migrant parent and child relationship, including notions of ‘mothering from a distance’ have focused extensively on how relationships are maintained across borders to avoid family breakdown. In essence there is a representation of an adult migrant worker and the child who expresses an emotional affective connection with the parent abroad (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila (1997) and Parreñas (2005)) and how it was mostly mothers who maintained contact with their children through letters and phone calls.

Important as the work on how neoliberalism has shaped migration at global scales and intensified inequalities for migrant workers moving from a developing to a developed country, it shifts attention from the children of migrants in advanced countries who have come of age and may draw on the cultural capital of the neoliberal household for economic capital accumulation.

In this Chapter, I focus on the working lives of British-Ghanaian youth and young adults to explain their transitions into work amid both economic opportunities and constraints. The Chapter shows that in addition to local factors, migration trajectories for work are influenced by neoliberal globalisation and economic processes. Neoliberal globalisation is linked to ‘deregulation, the growth of transnational corporations, the competition for skilled labour, growing income inequality and the opening of emerging economies [that] are introducing new risks, opportunities and networks’ (Goldin & Reinert, 2012:160). Interestingly, a sub-sample of my research respondents in the UK were young people whose working lives are characterised by experiences of being a global risk-bearing subject, that leverages social networks and uneven development (economic opportunities and constraints) from different places and with diverse people for capital accumulation (Katz, 2004). Thus, in pursuing their life goals, the young people live ‘more as a citizen of a non-bounded society (one shaped by extraterritorial social, economic and cultural forces) than as a citizen of a bounded territorial state’ (Nevins, 2002:180).

I trace the conceptual linkages between young people's social reproduction and their neoliberal subjectivities to their parent's historical youth migration experiences (including paid and unpaid work) and present working conditions to offer an understanding of contemporary neoliberalism. By drawing on recent and historical connections, I intend to establish critical topographies of how British-Ghanaian transnational households are simultaneously affected by the effects of globalised capitalist production and the characteristics of young people's circuits of production. Moreover, the selected spaces and unexamined connections of (re)production also suggest how young people ‘also reproduce themselves differently amidst the common political-economic and social processes they experience’ in what can be linked to transnational ‘countertographies’ (Katz 2001:721).

Scholars have indicated the need to ‘look at the nuances of global migrations, the breaks and disruptions but also the continuities of daily life’ (Boehm et al., 2011:6). Thus, this Chapter briefly explores the employment trajectories of the parents of the British-

Ghanaian youth in this study, many of whom moved to the UK between the late 1980s and 1990s. It then turns to explore the working experiences of the children of these migrant parents who have come of age in the UK.

The Chapter develops the argument that by examining young people's social spaces and circuits of production (working spaces outside the home) and social reproduction sites (homes), we can understand the less visible parts of neoliberal globalisation processes and how young people come to see themselves as neoliberal agents. Moreover, beyond the effects of the economic crisis on labour markets, focusing on social reproduction allows us to imagine alternative forms of globalisation that emerge as a result of uneven development and young people's creative responses amid economic constraints (Katz, 2004). In particular, within the context of British-Ghanaian transnational youth, there is a socio-spatial and temporal distancing that emerges as part of their work trajectories and the desire to meet social reproduction needs. To understand the forms of work undertaken by young people as they negotiate economic constraints in the world of work, I apply Bourdieu's concept of forms of capital and how it is accumulated, converted and valued or devalued within the transnational social field as neoliberal households work towards meeting their social reproduction needs. In Bourdieu's theory, four types of capital can be distinguished: economic, social, symbolic and cultural capital. Economic capital constitutes the wealth and income of an individual or family, and it can enable access to other capitals (1986:243-9). Social capital constitutes an individual's network, contacts or connections that can be utilised for certain benefits (249). Symbolic capital represents the ability to use certain symbols in making a physical and social reality. Cultural capital stands for habits, social skills, linguistic skills and tastes which are acquired by an individual through various institutions or sites. Under cultural capital Bourdieu identified three forms of cultural capital: first, institutionalised cultural capital (e.g. an individual's qualifications such as a degree or certificate); second, objectified cultural capital congealed in material resources (e.g. artefacts); and third, embodied cultural capital, which includes bodily expressions and tastes for certain things.

In trying to understand the working lives of young people as they transition from childhood into adulthood, I conducted in-depth interviews and observation of three youth (20-24 years) and five young adults (25-35 years) in London. In Ghana, one young woman (age 20-24) consented to be interviewed after her cousin in London referred her to me.

While all eight people's experiences will be used in my analysis, I will draw on the situation of four people (three of them based in the UK and one in Ghana) to exemplify the neoliberal subject's social space. Analysis will also be done in relation to parents or adults historical accounts. Primarily, the sample of young adults' childhoods were bi-transnational (between Ghana and UK) shaped by family return visits to Ghana, I will argue that their youth and young adulthood is characterised by 'going global,' involving circular migration practices and embeddedness in multinational social spaces (Castles 2010:1566).

### **Historical context: migration for a better life? Parental narratives of deskilling, overtime work and delayed transitions**

Kwesi, who is now in his fifties, came to the UK in his late twenties after graduating with an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) degree from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). His goal of moving to the UK to find 'office work' or work that does not require lots of energy or force, 'with good pay, save some and send some money home' is very typical of how most young Ghanaians perceive the purpose or benefit of labour migration. To his dismay, he could only secure a cleaning offer working forty-eight hours weekly after a referral by a friend who was also working for the shop. In fact, prior to leaving Ghana, he informed his friend about the need for a job. As noted by Kelly & Lusi (2006: 841-842), most migrants' social capital is often activated from the origin country rather than on arrival. However, his weekly salary was insufficient to cater for accommodation and food costs. Thus, an extra job with 20 hours of work was taken at a location that was 2 hours on a bus from his first job. The second job enabled him to save some money to send back to Ghana, as noted below:

*'It was my eldest sister who supported me through a connection to come to the UK. She paid for my flight, visa and gave me some pocket money as well so I needed to work hard to pay her back and move on.'*

However, at certain times, the long working hours (at least 10 hours a day) meant that he regretted leaving Ghana as he felt he would not have done a 'cleaning job as a graduate in Ghana.' Moreover, there were instances of unpaid 'overtime' or working additional hours as well as delayed payments:

*'The first cleaning job was at Thornton Heath. It was cash in hand pay by then. This Jamaican guy who was my supervisor and I had worked for three*



*weeks and the guy did not want to pay me. However, I had to force him to pay me.'*

While he has not been a victim of racial discrimination, after thirty years of living in the UK, he perceives barriers to securing jobs or career progression affects certain black people:

*'Some people here are racist. Some English people if they do not like you, then they do not like you. Even though you could have an opportunity here, there is a limit you can go if you are an immigrant. With the recent flow of immigrants from other Eastern European countries, the amount of opportunities for blacks has reduced. Most employers or whites prefer their people.'*

One day, Kwesi invited me to a hometown association meeting in South London, where he introduced me to one of his friends, Clara from Kumasi. Clara is also in her early fifties. She first came to the UK in her teenage years to visit her father, who was studying in London. Later her family relocated to Ghana, but she moved to the UK in her twenties. Before coming to the UK, she had broken up her relationship with her fiancé who promised to marry her after his graduation from Medical School. Clara now regrets deciding to break-up with him because of her migration intention. However, she feels her decision was also informed by poor communication (Manuh, 2001) options before the year 2000:

*'You know those days; the internet was not easily accessible on the phone as we have today... I remember my relatives abroad by then will record messages on cassette tape and post it. It will take weeks for you to receive and you reply in the same way, and it takes another time ... all the suspense if there is an emergency. Same with letter...and calls you have to go and wait at the communication centre hours for a call. Today is different; with WhatsApp which is cheaper and instant.'*

Her first job in the UK was a 30 hours per week security guard. She also did a second job in a famous food service company in London to be able to 'survive the cost of living in London':

*'I remember those days; I will finish my first job and then quickly rush home and change into the working uniform for the second job. One day I was working over there and my friends whom I knew in Ghana came there and they were like, Clara is that you? They were shocked because my Dad is a lawyer in Ghana, and we were well to do. I could have stayed with my sister and avoided all that hustle, but at the same time, I wanted to be independent – have my own house and money to spend.'*

Her friends being 'shocked', reflects the perhaps unexpected displacement in migrants economic and social status as they move to places with uncertainty (Punch, 2012). Later on, she decided to take on a caregiving job in what could be termed as a 'socio-spatially isolated' (Hopkins, 2017:370) location outside London which involved much preparation to enable her to survive with work outside London city:

*'Always I was going for work I had to get some Ghanaian food, like Yam and Kenkey and other things like Shea butter, Maggi and Milo. I will also fry some fish and chicken to take along. It was a long commute. Sometimes when I get there, even to get a taxi is exhausting. I was often scared when I was going coming back alone at night. Sometimes the person who will come and replace me will not come early and I had to spend extra time that was not paid for.'*

Both Clara and Kwesi are now UK citizens. Kwesi is currently an ICT consultant after completing a master's degree in the UK. He owns a house and is married to Louisa, an Ashanti woman in her forties and they have two children. Clara also has a bachelor's degree in social policy and works for a council and takes care of her two children as a single parent.

Clara and Kwesi illustrate the social reproduction experiences of young people as they move with the hope of getting a job that matches their skills. For most young migrants, despite their existing social network of relations that may offer insights for job searches, only low-skilled jobs may be available. This contributes to their deskilling as they were unable to utilise their skills in another country. Interviews revealed that while most Ghanaian migrants were working as skilled personnel in the health sector, ICT and teaching in Ghana, they ended up in cleaning, customer assistant, personal homecare assistant and security guard jobs in the UK. Moreover, some jobs were irregular and sub-contracted with

salary uncertainties and delays from agencies or agents (Manuh, 2001). In the words of Hopkins (2017:370), some of these jobs are ‘socio-spatially isolated because they do not have colleagues, they are also not unionised and are often excluded from labour laws.’ Consequently, workers powerless or with insufficient income to meet their reproductive needs as noted in the case of Afia’s mother in Chapter 5 of this thesis. However, as recent migrants and transnational youth returning to Ghana immediately or declining job offers was not an option because of existing social contracts to send remittances or repay the money to relations who supported travel arrangements or fulfil family obligations of helping younger siblings in Ghana.

Moreover, migration for work or education is considered beneficial in the Ghanaian cultural context. Thus left-behind relations do not easily concur with return decisions. Accordingly, working extra hours (overtime) or multiple jobs at different locations to earn an income or sharing accommodation to reduce the cost of living were some of the coping strategies that enabled young migrants to ‘survive’ in the UK.

Inaccessibility of skilled work with better pay also resulted in delays in remittances with consequential effects on social reproduction arrangements. For some respondents family tensions were experienced with left behind family relations who are often unaware of the challenges of integration in the UK job market or ‘the high cost of remittances which often eats into the amount sent to Ghana,’ as Kwesi noted. Thus, from a transnational perspective, inadequate income, unpaid work or delayed pay has effects on social reproduction translocally or across geographic scales or borders and also indicates a spatial and temporal relation between productive and reproductive spheres of life. Concerns regarding rising remittance cost have resulted in informal channels of sending money to relations. When I was going to Ghana for my fieldwork, some respondents, mostly working-class families, gave me money to take to their relations in Ghana. Furthermore, for certain respondents, the lack of recognition and devaluation of their academic qualification and the skills mismatch ‘forced’ them to acquire similarly or higher qualifications in the UK. This delayed young people’s capital accumulation goals thereby affecting their social status or a transition into adulthood as money has become a key marker of other symbols of adulthood (e.g. housing as noted in Chapter 6). The poor labour market integration experiences challenge the easily held assumption in most migration-development migration discourse by international development organisations/agencies which suggest social and economic

upward mobility when people have the opportunity to migrate. Moreover, the fact that institutional cultural capital (e.g. academic degree certificate) is devalued upon arrival suggest a contradiction between it being a visa requirement and yet being less useful than migrants' expectations. That being said, institutional capital can have the 'use value' based on alumni networks with the potential of sharing employment information as noted in Kwesi's experience.

Although in the 1990s labour market integration challenges existed, it is also clear that within the past decade Britain's gig economy has become one of the leading employment avenues for immigrants who are employed in low skilled poorly-paid, long working hours, insecure jobs including zero-hour contract jobs. Reports of the implications of contemporary working models were noted. For instance, Ivan (36+ adult, London), a father of four girls, noted:

*'With this job, sometimes I go to work not even knowing whether I will get the hours I want in a day... it is such that you do not even know what you will earn in a week or month... meanwhile, you have bills and children to take care of.'*

Instead of having policies that promote comparability of qualifications, the devaluing of the qualifications of migrants has enabled a supply and demand environment for low paid work and further perpetuates master-servant relations (Parreñas, 2001; Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Bhattacharya & Vogel, 2017:370).

Shifts in social status also characterised the experiences of younger first-generation Ghanaian immigrants who have been in the UK for the past ten to fifteen years. A famous phrase among younger first-generation migrants was, 'London the leveller.' The word leveller could not be taken literally as it had social and economic connotations. A 35-year-old respondent's comment captured its meaning by comparing life in Ghana to the UK:

*'In Ghana, with my degree and work experience, I had a car, house and a driver for my work. Since I came here I have done all sort of jobs like cleaning... here you work long hours. The funny thing is here, a doctor or professor will be using a bicycle to work. Often before we travel, we feel we are coming here to work, get money, buy a house, a car and enjoy but there is no enjoyment over here. You spend your time working, working and all of it*

*goes into paying bills, and you come back to square one. The other thing is, like, in Ghana there are men's job and women's job. In Ghana, men will rarely do cleaning or homecare work for money, but here you do what you get.'*

The term 'London the leveller', to my respondents, represents how migration removes any form of class-based privilege among most Ghanaians living in London. Among Ghanaian's specific social and economic indicators are critical markers of a 'good life.' For instance, higher education qualification, a big housing or a flashy car are pointers of a good life. On the one hand, while levelling shows the constraints faced by Ghanaian immigrants, it also suggests discontinuities in certain gendered practices such as what men or women's work is (Manuh, 1999).

Young people who had no legal documents or what most Ghanaians refer to as 'nkrataa' [papers] were also trapped in exploitative jobs. For instance, Kwabena, who is 33 years old, had overstayed his visit visa because he felt he would 'never have a visa in the future.' Having become undocumented and working as a cleaner and at a bakery, sometimes he was unpaid by the employer. He noted that he does 'not complain due to fear of being losing his job.' Moreover, as an effect of long working hours, health problems or long-term implication were expressed by some respondents in London. In a group discussion, one leader of a church noted the death of a church member due to poor working conditions.

Similarly, Portia, 25-year-old woman living in Ghana whose father works in London noted, 'I wish I can ask my father to come back home because each time I call... he is working.' Until 2018, the UK Home Office collected data from the National Health Service (NHS) on immigration. In response, undocumented Ghanaians chose to avoid healthcare from the hospitals due to fear of arrest (Kilner, 2014). Moreover, in addition to asking for prayers from relatives and their churches in the UK, the transnational practice of requesting for prayers from individual pastors or relations and requesting for herbs was common. Medicinal herbs were often brought by other Ghanaians returning from family visits to London.

The constraints illustrated is similar to the account presented Manuh's (1998; 2005) research regarding Ghanaian immigrants in Canada who had to settle for jobs that were lower than their expectations or what they previously did in Ghana as a means of surviving on a daily basis, in the absence of specific social support (e.g. extended family or

community support) on arrival. Likewise, the vicissitude of Ghanaian immigrants working experiences is captured in the ‘Sansa Akroma’ [literally means Ghanaians moving from one place to the other like a migratory bird] on the *Dabi Dabi Ebe Ye Yie* [literally suggests the hope of circumstances abroad getting better in the near future] Album by Amakye Dede in the 1990s (Dede, 1990). This Ghanaian song and similar genres is often the ‘go-to online song from Youtube’ used to express or channel their emotional response to the social reproduction needs of most Ghanaians during challenging working conditions and in the absence of close relations who could offer encouragement or solidarity. As noted by Baily & Collyer (2006), the cultural production of music and its consumption is important in the migration process. Amid feelings of loneliness and acute exploitation, exported music can be therapeutic and empowering, especially for poor and working-class individual migrants and immigrant communities.

It is also worth mentioning that apart from virtual sites, for most Ghanaian transnational households, social capital was also built through networks of friends and old school mates, one such group often met as a community fortnightly around Lambeth to discuss the social and economic needs of their members. Sometimes, they collected donations for bereaved members or attended the graduation or naming ceremony of a member while local Ghanaian music was being played to reaffirm their identities, where they came from, everyday challenges of being a migrant and a sense of solidarity. They made a WhatsApp community group chat which played an important role in connecting members virtually while reminding people of meetings or social events (e.g. weddings, funerals, etc.) similar to those they would attend in Ghana. Essentially, social capital was an important ‘use value’ in translocal connections in London while reducing the emotional and psychological effects of being away from Ghana.

### **Parental experiences: extended time and reproduction spaces**

The working experiences of most first-generation migrant parents in the UK were often shared during conversations with relations and at various social spaces, including churches or hometown meetings. These immigration conversations were known in Twi as ‘*Akwantuo mu nsem*’ [Immigration matters]. While one would imagine that such experiences shared with relations in Ghana would discourage left-behind relations from migrating, it did not. As noted earlier, the culture of migration is rooted in the notion that people can make it elsewhere, especially outside of Ghana. Moreover, similar to Mexican emigration, most

young people believe that the gains associated with migration are higher than any risks or challenges (Nevins, 2002b). Similarly, left-behind relations felt they needed to ‘experience things for themselves.’ As a 23-year-old male noted, ‘if things are that bad there [overseas] why is it that they always come and go back again?’ Consequently, most Ghanaians feel every aspiring migrant should have the opportunity to travel *Aburokyire* [abroad] in order to inform their future migration intentions or decide where the so-called ‘better life’ can be found, that is whether in Ghana or overseas.

Amid experiences of rising cost of living and declining social services support for families, the homes of most respondents became a primary (re)production site for extra work. Most Ghanaian migrant parents are of the view that ‘depending on government for social support will not allow one to accomplish certain migration goals, including owning a house in Ghana,’ as an informant noted. Therefore, almost all adults were involved in local and transnational entrepreneurial activities in addition to their regular jobs out of the house. For instance, Adjoa’s mother, Clara and Alberta’s mother, Louisa, are friends. They attend the same church in South East London. Similar to historical accounts of Ashanti women who travelled by commercial buses to Togo, Ivory Coast and other places to purchase commodities including food or clothing for sale in Ghana, these two women also embark on bus trips to Paris to purchase bags and shoes for sale in London (Clark, 2010). These trips were often undertaken during weekends or holidays from their regular work. During such business travel, Alberta is cared for by her older sister, a school headteacher, whom she refers to as ‘super nanny’ owing to her disciplinary attitude.

Similarly, commercial material resources are sent from Ghana during return family visits or through other people. British-Ghanaian transnational children living in the UK and Ghana are equally involved in this work practice by running errands or marketing products. For example, during fieldwork in Ghana, Maaboa a ‘sister’<sup>31</sup> to Alberta brought me Kente to be given to Louisa. Later on, I discovered the items are sold in London to ‘make ends meet.’ Besides, women’s fabric popularly known as Holland and also other second-hand items such as iron, clothing, cooking utensils and shoes were shipped to Ghana and sold and the money from the sales sent by the left-behind young people. Principally, youth-left behind were involved in the form of reverse remittance through sending sales revenue to their parents in London. Likewise, British-Ghanaian transnational children in London helped their mothers

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<sup>31</sup> Social kinship

in marketing products. For instance, before bedtime Adjoa (10-13 years old years, high school student, London) photographs and posts pictures of various Kente cloth designs for display on the WhatsApp status or her mother's Facebook profile and adds phrases like 'Quality kente available... call (Number)' and sends responses to online queries from potential buyers based on her mother's advice. Adjoa's work is unpaid, but she feels her role is to 'help' her mother. Interestingly, children involved in home-based enterprise London or Ghana through selling, market or negotiations were all girls and older girls controlled remittances. The role of women in the clothing industry is well documented in the work of Sylvanus (2016).

Home-based enterprises illustrate the potentially blurred line between production and reproduction spheres of everyday life. Due to economic needs or constraints, the house or home, a site which is assumed to be a resting place after regular work becomes an extended place for commercialised work in addition to other domestic work that may be taken for granted. While it can be argued that transnational children may undertake unwaged work for their parents, I argue that in a culture of reciprocity, children may support or 'help' their parent's work with the expectation that their parents will provide for their needs when requested. Additionally, it can be argued that parental attitudes of self-making, independence, capital accumulation as well as local and transnational practices of importing goods from other places or marketing goods on social media are essential in socialising children on aspects of how to be an enterprising individual.

For some middle-class families confronted with the choice of keeping their regular jobs and getting childcare from institutions, or sending their child to Ghana, mothers decided to provide childcare personally. For instance, Amanpene's mother resigned from her regular office work to start an enterprise, 'because of the rising cost of childcare and also there was no time for the children when I was working for the company. It's [a] low paid job with no room for better conditions or negotiations... I could not do drop off and pick up the children from school'. Parents' decision to provide personal care is often motivated by an emotional and moral 'sense of responsibility' to care for children (Ansell, 2008:808). Sometimes parents negotiated with neighbours, including friends or housemates for unpaid childcare, resigning regular jobs and taking on personal enterprise was a way of orientating children about work being a regular part of adult (for both women and men) life (Hochschild, 2000; Hochschild & Machung, 2012).



When care is defined as ‘being there’, it was justified by not just ‘gendered morality of a selfless...mother’ that places ‘children’s interest first’ but also cultural notions that encouraged parents to take care of their children till ‘they have matured teeth’ (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson, 2016). Children are expected to reciprocate by taking care of parents till the ‘parents lose their teeth’ in old age as Amanpene noted. Hence there is a link between a good childhood provided by parents and a good old age as children were being socialised to appreciate family-based care – which ultimately most parents will require in old age and a critical dimension of the inter-generational reciprocal network of care and connection (Coe, 2017).

Children can be orientated towards possibilities of an individual neoliberal subject independent of government support through their parent’s decision to resign from capitalist firms into entrepreneurship or self-employment. First, resigning from a regular job in a capitalist firm could mean taking a ‘risk’ into the unknown or uncertainty about the profit prospects of a new business. However, as mentioned earlier, this action is taken by certain households to increase household income while having more time to take care of domestic duties including childcare.

Parents perceive education as an essential cultural capital that British-Ghanaian children need to negotiate various constraints including barriers in career progression as a racialised category of people who are likely to experience specific employment barriers including racism. For children in London, when their parents recalled their own school-to-work transition experiences as discussed earlier, they felt their children were ‘privileged’ to benefit from a UK education. Thus, British-Ghanaian transnational children’s education was often prioritised with UK-Ghana opportunities compared:

*‘I have always encouraged them to take their education seriously as in this country if only you study, you will get something to do...For the past five to ten years, the situation is bad in Ghana. Here [London] if only you study, you will get somewhere’ (Kwesi, Rosemary’s father).*

*‘I tell him there are opportunities in this country unlike Ghana, here when you work hard you will go far because most of our managers here in the UK did not go far in education, but since they were born here [UK] and can speak English they are given top positions. So here when you go to school and get a top position as a black person, you must work twice as hard. I tell*

*him if he can write, speak and read English well and also go far in education he can go anywhere. I take him to construction sites and tell him that it is either he works like them or sits in the office. I have made him aware that it is either you learn and go far in education, or you learn a trade' (Edward, Isaac's father).*

*'It is about building a certain class system that we wanted to maintain. While other people are thinking about building houses in Ghana or going to live in Ghana we were thinking about here and maintaining a level over here...to make sure our children get a good school, private tutoring after school' (Amanpene's mother).*

The above account of Amanpene's mother clearly indicated that cultural capital is considered to be 'convertible into money' (Bourdieu, 1986:243). In other words, cultural capital is considered a more meaningful or effective approach towards building economic capital than building a house in Ghana.

Bearing in mind the employment and education experiences, it is also worth mentioning that the religious practice within the church is also an essential space for social reproduction outside the home. However, transnational migration has the potential of destabilising traditionally gendered norms and certain religious ideologies (Manuh, 1999). In both Ghana and the UK, pastors preached messages that emphasised girls and women's subordinate position within society by quoting the 1 Peter 3:7 Bible scripture that says, women are 'the weaker vessel'. In church, I discovered that while this phrase was used to suggest that women need to be treated delicately, it portrayed girls and women as inadequate. They therefore are expected to be submissive to men. Moreover, it communicates to women that certain tasks or ambitions are the preserve of men and therefore reinforces masculine behaviours.

In the context of young people's unpaid work within Ghana, both children and adults reproduced these notions that separated boys' and girls' work. For instance, time-use diaries and discussions indicated that boys felt they are more capable of arranging chairs, grass cutting and playing musical instruments while girls did sweeping and cleaning the church premises. However, for British-Ghanaian transnational children and youth in London, church work was gender-neutral among children as parent's felt they needed to encourage

both boys and girls to do any form of work. Gender neutrality is also linked to parenting ideologies regarding the continuities and discontinuities of gendered norms within transnational social fields. For instance, in Ghana, male-female relations may be centred around the man as the breadwinner and the woman as a homemaker, thereby creating class divisions within the household. However, when most Ghanaians migrate, it is expected that both men and women will take on this dual role; though in most cases I realised that most men did not do most of the domestic work as they professed and therefore the burden of domestic work rested heavily on girls and women. The gender ideology of the dual breadwinner and homemaker was encouraged among men and women due to the highly financialised and monetised nature of everyday life and social relations (e.g. commodified childcare) in the UK society, and the fact that parents needed economic capital to raise their children. As a result, children were socialised based on the dual role of both men and women's involvement in homemaking and earning income outside of the home to meet expenditures. That being said, unpaid work particularly by young adults involving tutorials for youth, mentoring, cleaning the church which covered a combined time of about 14 hours per week was considered 'service to God that will be returned in terms of blessings to them'. These blessings include passing their academic examinations, good job, good health and general access to self-making opportunities.

Children and childhoods were sites for reproducing religious doctrines with an unquestioning acceptance of religious messages. Children and young people's activities and participation in the church was highly valued because they were considered as 'the future of the church or people who will maintain their adult practices.' To illustrate this, certain events such as Children's Day service were organised by adults for children to perform. For instance, I was invited by Sylvanus, one of my child respondents' father to their church's Children's Day event. Some of my child respondents, together with other children, were asked to officiate a full day's church service from opening prayers, singing, and offertory to saying the closing prayers while adults listened and responded to the children's instructions. In most of the children's activities and pastors' messages, religious values of gendered roles, gentleness and being non-resistant attitude were legitimised or encouraged (Ansell, 2017a). However one Sunday on our way to church, concern about 'losing most of the children as they come of age' as a result of long hours of church service, conservatism and gerontocracy and also communication challenges as some of them are unable to comprehend church

service with Twi as the primary medium of communication was expressed by a church pastor and Kwesi.

Moreover, parents and young people had different views about religion: on the one hand, to most adults, the church was a site for providing spiritual and emotional welfare and solidarity to members. On the other hand, most young people including British-Ghanaian transnational children and youth were of the view that religious practices and social relations of most traditional churches were rooted in religious beliefs and social relations that did not allow for diverse opinions or ways of life. Likewise, certain practices such as offertory or payment of money to pastors are seen as exploitative and reminiscent of capitalist relations of capital accumulation. In fact, in some churches, electronic cash machines were used for the sale of products or fundraising, thereby contributing to embedding the church in a capitalist commodity circuit. At the same time, some people felt certain churches which are supposed to be charitable in helping the poor rather takes their money and sometimes remain unconcerned in times of economic or social challenges. As a result, British Ghanaian youth and young adults had grown up being less active in religious practice or resisting the status quo or specific ways of religion by leaving the church.

Charismatic churches that were multicultural with members from various countries - as often indicated by flags of the countries hanging in the churches have become immediate alternatives. These churches encouraged youth involvement, particularly in decision-making. Moreover, the worship format was diverse with popular culture music such as gospel reggae from various parts of the world including the American, Caribbean, South African and Nigerian music rather than just Ghanaian music (Ansell, 2017b). This is equally an important aspect of how they 'go global' based on their association with multicultural religious spaces.

Furthermore, the multicultural nature of contemporary churches allowed young people to expand their support and consumer networks of people who supported or purchased some of their items or connected them to opportunities or friends elsewhere as noted by Jerry in the quote below:

*'Our church has branches in other countries. I remember in 2011, when I was travelling to Spain, I did not know anyone, but one of my friends in our church here in London who is Nigerian introduced me to a brother... we need help each other as scripture tells us, be your brother or sister's, keeper.'*

Having discussed some of the contextual factors of productive - reproductive spheres of work as well as transnational practices, the next section will present case studies of the older children (aged between 23 and 35 years) of transnational migrant parents and their neoliberal subjectivities.

### **Three case studies of young people growing up, leveraging capital and going global**

Unlike their parent's, young people who have come of age demonstrated networks and ties that went beyond Ghanaian communities into more extensive networks through their working lives which can be associated with extending transnationalism from below (Castells, 1996). To illustrate this within the transnational social space, I draw on fieldwork data to explain the working lives of three British-Ghanaian young working adults in the UK aged between 23 and 35 years.

#### *Rosemary and Hilda*

Rosemary is twenty-three years old and Alberta's older sister. She has a bachelor's degree in International Relations and has a regular job as a retail associate with a large company in London. She started a master's degree in 2016 but dropped out of school due to financial constraints and does not intend to continue her education as she perceives that:

*'When you are in school, they do not show you where you can get jobs that will help you progress...they just advice to apply for a job in retail or go to a job centre, but they do not show you anything else.'*

She feels her income is inadequate and notes that 'at the end of the day when transport, food and other expenses are calculated I run at a loss, but because I wanted to get the experience I had to sacrifice.' Her long-term aspiration is to become a 'business tycoon as that will allow her flexibility of time.' She stressed that she wants to avoid the nature of work the parents do as 'they are never home together... one comes, and the other is leaving. If I have my own business that will allow me to make money, control my time.' Since 2015, she has been collecting donations from her friends at work in London for an orphanage in Ghana. She feels Ghana is a difficult place to live and she mentioned that her cousin, Hilda is unemployed, but she has started a beads business with her. In 2016, I met Hilda during my data collection in Ghana, who mentioned:

*'I was looking for a job while in school and after completing it more challenging. But even when you find a job here in Ghana, the take-home pay does not even take you home. You have to find other things doing; you have to take on other businesses so that you can get money from both sides and make a better living. For the beads business, I usually make them ready for shipment, or we give it to someone to take it along as sometimes the shipment can be expensive.'*

When the items arrive in London, they are advertised on social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram and Facebook. Stephane also learned about the qualities of each Kente design, including meanings behind each cloth pattern and various designs for different events. She mentioned, 'I have learned a lot of these from my mum because she had most of these.' Interestingly, her customers are not just Ghanaians but Africans and Europeans living in Europe interested in 'African or colourful prints' as she puts it.

#### *Jerry*

Jerry's ideas are very much in line with the typical migration for development agenda that is being advanced by most neoliberal institutions like the United Nations' agency International Organisation for Migration where migrants are seen as agents of development. During my interview with Jerry in London, he noted that he 'struggled with his identity as a child of a Ghanaian migrant' and therefore he established an organisation called Mfri-Ghana (literally, I come from Ghana). The organisation currently undertakes programmes including award ceremonies for young Ghanaians living abroad and a weekend professional social networking and skills training for young British-Ghanaians. At the 2018 award ceremony, the Ghana Embassy in London's representative applauded Jerry's organisation and encouraged them to continue to 'mobilise British-Ghanaians to contribute to the development of Ghana.'

Moreover, since 2012, his organisation organised a business mentoring initiative with one of Ghana's private universities. While Jerry is based in London, he has established Chapters of his organisation in five other European countries and the USA and often moves to these countries for activities including planning and fundraising with funds from donors including the European Commission. After his master's graduation, Jerry worked for his university but resigned to focus on his organisation while providing childcare at home. Jerry

exemplifies the neoliberal global subject: those who take risks act as agents of development for developing countries through capital accumulation and moving between places and connecting young people through ideas and activities. Jerry's father built a house in Ghana, but he does not think he will acquire any property in Ghana though he feels 'there are a lot of business opportunities in Ghana and Africa in general.' Though, as a researcher I am not related to Jerry, he would often refer to me as 'brother' and sometimes referred to other Africans as 'my brother or sister from another mother.' To him, schoolmates and church members 'are scattered across the world' and anybody he can 'trust whether Nigerian or Polish is a brother and sister.' He emphasised, trust as a more critical element of kin and non-kin relationship and he illustrates this by a previous experience: 'some time ago in 2015, I felt I could count on family relations in Ghana for a project I was doing, but they misused the money and were telling me stories. Meanwhile, I have not experienced this same level of dishonesty from my business partners...that is why I refer to others as brothers.' In terms of capital, Jerry's social network and therefore, the inclusion of non-kin relations in the family contributes to social capital formation, an essential aspect of contemporary businesses.

#### *Abena*

Abena is Adjoa's eldest sister. She is married with four children and is the founding director of a private enterprise that focuses on promoting Africans in the UK. She is fluent in English, Twi and French. In an interview session, she showed me a picture of her receiving an MBE medal at Buckingham Palace and a Forbes recognition. She noted that after her university graduation, it was difficult finding a flexible job that will allow her to take care of her children and thus she was unemployed for a while until she had a business idea. She has an office for her enterprise in Ghana and feels there are 'many opportunities to tap into in Ghana'. She involved in various activities, including being a Brand Ambassador for two hotels in Ghana and also sitting on the Board of government agencies. In 2018, she was involved in planning Ghana's 'Year of Return' annual celebration of the return of Africans in the diaspora and noted that through that work she has been able to meet famous people including African-American actors from Hollywood. She also confirmed plans for an event she is hosting in the USA for African's living in the USA. Her view is that the USA has a wide variety of women's products including cosmetics and clothing which are much cheaper, so she does 'big shopping from the US and sometimes sells some of the purchased

items on the return to the UK'. She attends a multicultural church that was founded by a Nigerian pastor. Through her church, she met a Senegalese member in New York who was introduced to her by her pastor in the UK, and they have been planning the US event together. She regularly posts updates about her movements and activities 'here and there' and sometimes advertises third-party events for a fee on her social media and noted in a conversation that 'the job I am doing now has a future...you move, and you can monetise other things you are doing to get an extra income'. Similarly, she has opened an Instagram account for her three children where she posts about her children's everyday life including their African dresses, dancing and Twi speaking skills. She mentioned, 'I created it for them. Maybe by the time they grow, it will have more followers from everywhere, and they can get money from these platforms.' As a frequent traveller with her UK passport which most Ghanaian's refer to as 'Red book', she noted that 'everywhere feels like home' and that she believes she 'can make an impact around the world and not just to Ghana.' Abena feels her husband has been very supportive of her ambitions as she is often not at home. Her mother has an African market in London, and she used to work there at weekends during her teen years into her twenties. Her father also had a dry-cleaning business, but that was closed down due to poor returns. Abena also exemplifies young adults who have accumulated cultural capital, and her social capital has allowed her to take advantage of further possibilities for capital accumulation in Ghana and the UK.

### **Conclusion: Young people stretching the transnational social field and the role of capital**

The movement of people and the flow of entrepreneurial ideas and material resources for sale in London places their transnational ties in the context of global capitalism. While Kente is a native Ghanaian cloth, the consumption of this product by non-Ghanaians illustrates how young people are stretching the British-Ghanaian transnationals social field (Castells, 1996). Of course, the export of African prints has a much longer history than this suggests (Kriger, 2006; Boateng, 2011).

The experiences of the young people captured by the case studies above can be situated within the intersection of globalisation, mobilities, capital accumulation and life transitions from childhood to adulthood as they come of age as children of transnational migrant parents in the world of work.



The forms of movement that emerges among these young adults as children of migrant parents must be seen as an expression of their agential competence in responding to global economic constraints and opportunity structures at the local level and across transnational geographical spaces. For instance, as noted in the case of Abena, her unemployment - as a constraint – situation in the UK and later on a developed business idea enables her to take advantage of opportunities in multiple countries including the UK, Ghana and the UK. However, it is also clear that transnational social capital and therefore the networks and contacts with diverse people including kin-relations in Ghana and network of new ‘brothers or sisters’ from various social fields such as churches located in the UK or across other countries are critical to facilitating mobilities as well as ideas and material resources flows. Moreover, it is often assumed that transnational ties with kin relations are very strong or preferred within the family set up. However, with the trust being an essential element of transnational arrangements as seen in the case of Jerry, it is clear that certain moral values in transnational practices guide young people in ‘doing family’ in a different way. Here the transnational social space can be extended to incorporate diverse people from ‘other’ cultural backgrounds to facilitate transnational work arrangements amid changing global opportunities (Castells, 1996). Thus, new network formation of non-kin relations or fictive relationships that are based on how economic capital is utilised and how social capital is valued as well as its potential use is emphasised in transnational work arrangements.

Apart from the forming or maintaining contacts with kin and non-kin relations, from a social reproduction perspective, the use of technological spaces for work can also be considered as an extension of the transnational social field. Practices of marketing products online or responding to calls from customers as a form of work undertaken either at the house, hotel, airport, on the bus or aeroplane or while walking indicate a temporal relation between production-reproduction spheres of life. In this context, new technology-enabled social spaces that connect friends, family or customers and the entrepreneur, at various social fields can blur the sites of production and reproduction especially in contemporary business ideals of ‘on-demand service’ for customers which may involve prompt customer advice or response.

In their transnational work engagement with developing countries, British-Ghanaian transnational youth and adults are seen as ‘agents of development’ who are expected to use

their status as a person in an advanced country to support development interventions elsewhere. This reflects neoliberal migration and development interventions aimed at addressing uneven topographies of development between developing and developed countries (Katz, 2004). Contemporary neoliberal agenda to liberalise migration of some economic subjects while increasing the constraints and barriers for others can be understood in two principal ways: First, adult migrants and children of migrant parents (often referred to as second-generation in migration policies as well as in some transnational and diaspora studies) who have come of age are positioned as developmental agents. Their developmental contribution is often linked to the establishment of business in developing countries and diaspora philanthropy or remittances. Second, investor visas and citizenship often obtainable in most advanced nation-states like the USA and UK enable wealthy owners of capital to move as part of the capitalist production system. While the young people whom I interviewed did not possess an investor visa, they believed their British passport is powerful.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, this symbolic cultural capital enables them to enter developing and developed countries without restrictions. Moreover, all the British-Ghanaian young adults had dual nationality and as such, had a Ghanaian passport that allowed them to move to Ghana and some African countries without visa restrictions as per the provisions in Ghana's migration policy (Ministry of Interior, 2016).

As children of Ghanaian migrant parents, the relationship between their childhood and adulthood is worth explaining. First, within the UK-Ghana transnationals social field, while young people in Ghana face barriers with their migration aspirations as discussed in Chapter 4, British-Ghanaian transnational youth who have dual citizenship are involved in fluid physical movements between places which is a crucial characteristic of neoliberal globalisation that often benefits people in certain developed countries, thereby creating inequalities. The fact that their movements are also enabled by the advantages of citizenship provisions attached to their passport(s) also suggest the role of the state in their transnational - and transglobal practices (Collyer and King, 2015). Similarly, unlike the historical accounts of their parents who came to the UK as young migrants, with their mobilities often characterised by family visits to Ghana for holidays or family events, these contemporary neoliberal youth migration are involved in multidirectional temporary movements that is not

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<sup>32</sup> In fact, the Global Passport Index (<https://www.passportindex.org/byRank.php>) ranks passports. Comparatively, holders of British passports have greater visa-free access to more countries than holders of only Ghanaian passports.

just North-South movements but also characterised by North-North movements and circular migration patterns across spatial locations by creating new flows as well as leveraging existing ones. Secondly, work is an essential function of young people's developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. In growing up, young people are expected to work and earn an income that enables an individual to acquire or engage in specific markers of adulthood (e.g. housing or getting married). Thus, money has become a key currency in achieving the status of adulthood. Unfortunately, there are not many job options in the labour market for young people to choose from and some may be unemployed after university graduation. When they get a job, there is often the challenge of combining productive work under one employer to other reproductive demands at home. As noted in the account of Hilda, even for those who are employed within capitalist production relations, something like an extra job is required to make a living in the city or the margins of society. Thus, the transnational business of what Ghanaian's refer to as 'Tonaton' [buying and selling] has become a common coping strategy among transnational households. It is a practice that builds on and leverages the cultural capital of language or the skill in displaying or knowing the symbolic meanings behind specific Ghanaian clothing;<sup>33</sup> useful skills that are acquired through childhood interaction and socialisation from parents, which become useful in young adulthood. Furthermore, as they engage in 'buying and selling' locally and transnationally via various social networks and spaces such as on social media or at church, they are contributing to (re)producing or globalising Ghanaian culture as well as stretching the boundaries of Ghanaian culture from a local to a transnational status (Castells, 1996). Also, given that Ghanaian culture encourages migration, for British-Ghanaian transnational youth, the ability to work transnationally by moving from one place to the other and sharing images about their movement and activities on social media as seen in the context of Abena could project a social status of a hardworking, independent and self-sufficient adult.

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<sup>33</sup> The work of Howard, Sarpong, & Amankwah (2012), actually underscores the significance and meanings attached to symbols in African prints.

## Chapter 8

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### **Conclusions: Transnational families negotiating economic constraints and opportunities**

Globally, about 30 million children live outside their birth country for various reasons (UNICEF, 2016). The proportion increases steadily to almost half of the 258 million international migrants when other young people including adolescents and youth categories are added (United Nations, 2017). Despite the growing number of young people who move and those who stay behind, little is known about their everyday lives and their role as social actors in transnational social fields. This thesis contributes to closing that research gap through a multi-sited ethnography of Ghanaian transnational families, predominately but not exclusively located in a British-Ghanaian transnational social field.

Situated within the theoretical contributions of the New Social Studies of Childhood, this thesis considers children as competent social actors who are actively involved in negotiating and constructing the meaning of transnational social fields and the transnational family. Young people play an active role in migration processes. Empirically, I have used a multi-sited transnational framework to demonstrate how children and young people do this work and what their perspective is on transnational social fields. Their perspectives equally prove their agential competence in negotiating various structural political-economic constraints and opportunities encountered in the so-called ‘age of migration’, and neoliberal globalisation. Transnational perspectives of young people who have moved or those in western countries are not superior to those who stay behind; in fact, the decision to stay behind or to go global at a later point in the life course are both equally expressions of agency. Additionally, childhood is socially constructed and therefore the particular socio-cultural perspective that Ghanaian culture brings to the intersection of migration and childhood, plays out in how children and young people are emplaced in the transnational field and possibilities of childhood hybridity.

Traditionally, theoretical advancements in migration studies labelled children in transnational families as ‘economic dependents’ and the ‘luggage’ and therefore the burden of migrating parents. Children can be seen as, a ‘minority’ in adult society and in their relationship to adults (James, Jenks and Prout, 1998). Likewise, as noted in the introduction (Chapter 1) and in the literature review (Chapter 2) of this thesis, previous evidence

regarding the impact of the economic crisis on children and their significant relations have conceptualised children as vulnerable victims of globalisation. The case of British-Ghanaian transnational childhoods has shown that it is inadequate to individualise children and categorise the child as ‘at-risk’, ‘vulnerable’ or ‘left-behind’ due to the collective support that the transnational family or household offers. Moreover, my research has shown that the binary origin/destination countries approach to theorising migration based on a dichotomy between wealthy developing and impoverished developed country and notions that migration from developing countries to developed countries is always the desired direction of travel for a better life is simplistic when childhoods are considered. This thesis has also shown that children move independently or with their parents and testifies to various levels of transnational competences depending on their emplacements within transnational social fields.

These children and young people together with adult relations negotiate economic constraints to achieve a certain social and economic status within the transnational social field. This is shown here in the case of some young people in Ghana who may feel like a landlord or the ‘daughter’ of a migrant, despite owning no land or housing and not having a legal or biological relationship with their ‘mother’.

That said, social and economic inequalities persist in the lives of most young people who have come of age. Their emplacement in an advanced country or their parent’s initial aspiration for a better life, does not necessarily translate to social and economic advancement or a shift to a desirable social status due to the effects of political constraints which, as I have argued throughout this thesis, is due to the contradictions between the demands of capitalist production and the needs of social reproduction. Moreover, this thesis has argued that the impact of the crisis cannot be simply associated with persons in destination countries but rather, through the concept of linked-lives within historically connected nation-states, must incorporate the fact that most transnational families are likely to shift the cost of social reproduction to another place or distribute it across the transnational field. This perspective is therefore critical to understanding the deeper effects of political-economic changes.

Like childhood, the meaning of networks, capital accumulation and the ethics of social reproduction are socially constructed. Their meanings and why people pursue them in everyday ‘life’s work’, to use Katz et al’s phrase, are subject to economic, social and

cultural factors and expectations. Despite moving to other places for a ‘better life’, the ethics of care define where children’s life is expected to be ‘better’. But as young people grow up, their construction of where life is better is beyond the two-nation state uni-directional or even bi-national (that is, circular) transnational practice. Their emplacement in the local and globalised transnational social fields could often mean that their networks and cultural capital accumulated in childhood can be leveraged in adulthood. In effect, their emplacement will affect their life experiences and life outcomes among other factors such as gender, family wealth, community and family expectations and personal attributes.

In this final Chapter, I draw together the findings from four empirical Chapters (Chapter 4-7) to establish the impact of the economic crisis on social reproduction processes among Ghanaian transnational families. Specifically, I will focus on: how economic crisis reduces family resources and what the impacts of this are on children and other young people’s life course; how economic crisis influences the daily work of reproduction, transnational practices and the maintenance of social relations within the transnational social field and how do these, in turn, (re)shape the social field and; how the transnational family sustains its reproductive needs through various socially embedded material practices in times of economic crisis.

The central aim of this thesis is to establish that while members of transnational families may be vulnerable to structural constraints within the context of global capitalism and neoliberal globalisation, they also leverage a range of opportunities that allows the transnational family to survive despite the constraints. Moreover, within constraints, children and young people play an active role in transnational migration processes and practices. Drawing on the case of British-Ghanaian transnational children indicates that a multi-sited transnational framework that acknowledges children and youth as agential subjects (albeit subject to structural constraints) is critical to understanding how economic constraints and opportunities are negotiated in transnational social fields (Basch, Glick Schiller and Blanc, 1994).

The Chapter is structured as follows: First, I will explain how economic crisis reduces family resources and what the impacts of this are on children and other young people’s life course; Secondly, I will discuss how the transnational family sustains its reproductive needs through various material social practices in times of economic crisis; Thirdly, I will explain how economic crisis influence the daily work of reproduction,

transnational practices and the maintenance of social relations within the transnational social field and how that in turn (re)shapes the social field.

### **Understanding the impact of economic constraints on social reproduction processes within transnational households**

#### *Economic crisis and its impacts on family resources and young people's life course*

Throughout this thesis, I have indicated that economic crisis within the Ghana-UK transnational social field has come about due to the states' shrinking involvement in social reproduction and increasing privatisation. Likewise, intensely exploitative capitalist relations with workers (e.g. capitalist paying less than a living wage, unpaid overtime, etc.) and privatisation have meant families have to bear the responsibility through their everyday life work of reproducing themselves. In the process of reproducing themselves, they are often faced with constraints of poverty and insufficient income to meet the cost of commoditised services and also the lack of time to combine domestic and waged work. Children are often at the heart of the choices and the processes by which families come to reproduce themselves. Here I draw on four life course principles including historical time and place, timing of lives, linked-lives and inter-dependencies, and human agency in choices and decision-making to draw out the effect of this crisis of social reproduction on transnational families or households.

#### *Historical times and place.*

As noted in Chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7, older and younger generations are experiencing different forms of changes in society.

An earlier generation of young migrants, people who are now in their late 40s and early 50s, left Ghana in the 1980s due to poverty and unemployment in Ghana, and a desire for higher education or better income-earning jobs abroad. Primarily, this crisis in Ghana were caused by Structural Adjustment Policies (SAP) which had led to rising unemployment, and their poor conditions in Ghana means that they could not secure certain basic needs (e.g. food, soap, housing, etc.). However, to their dismay some of them arrived and could not find desirable jobs due to the devaluation of their educational certification in the UK labour market.

In Ghana, non-migrant children and other young people today demonstrate awareness about the poor nature of education despite the government agenda to make

education free and compulsory. Most children are anxious about employment chances after school and other young people in Ghana who had graduated were unemployed. The children of migrant parents as noted in Chapter 4, 6 and 7, are also living in the age of increasing globalised capitalism where government's involvement in employing young graduates is shrinking and as a result while some are unemployed those who have been employed are experiencing poor economic conditions due to inadequate working conditions including low income.

The children of those migrants who left Ghana in the 1980s and 1990s continue to live in a country where neoliberal globalised development agenda persist under the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) directives (including a freeze in public sector employment). However, a number of factors suggest that the children and significant relations of these migrant parents are growing up in a different political-economic context: On the one hand, children and young people in Ghana are growing up in a middle-income economy with rising cost of living as noted in Chapter 4. Young people in Ghana are also subject to increasingly restrictive immigration requirements imposed by the UK government, which have kept children and young people in poor and working-class families immobile. On the other hand, British-Ghanaian children and young people in the UK are growing up in a Brexit era where they are made to feel less European and yet being encouraged to be global and Commonwealth citizens. Moreover, another important social change for children of these migrants as noted in Chapter 4 and 7 has been the growth in media which has meant not only are transnational children involved in the consumption of culture but also being producers of culture as noted in Chapter 5 and 7 as they in their practices of doing family.

#### *The timing of lives.*

The temporality of childhoods and transitions into adulthood are not just age bounded/categories but socially constructed within Ghanaian transnational families. For instance, as noted in Chapter 4, as young people graduate from senior high school, they are expected to be able to secure certain basic needs and failure affects their social status as 'becoming men.' However, as noted, when boys are seen to have become 'big boys,' that can be advantageous in the sense that it can enhance their chances of being considered capable of migrating and also being supported collectively by family relations to realise migration ambitions (Chapter 4).



Housing is a status-enhancing asset and the monetisation of housing or lack of it has affected young people's transition from childhood to adulthood. As young people come of age, it is expected that they secure a job after their education. However, as noted in 4, 6 and 7, they encounter various forms of crisis-related either to being unemployed or employed with poor working conditions. This is captured, for example, in one respondent's pithy comment that 'even when you find a job here in Ghana, the take-home pay does not even take you home'. Thus, under such conditions, young people's social timing in relation to owning a home or getting married, and therefore their transition to adulthood, is delayed. There are gendered differences in how this affects young women and young men. Young men's 'stuckness' or continued dependence on their parents for a house implies they are not yet men and therefore not ready to be married and will not be recognised as fully or properly adult regardless of their age. On the other hand, for women, because of gender constructs of women's dependence on men, women's readiness for marriage is based on their age. Women do not necessarily need their own home as they are often expected to move to their husbands' home.

*Linked-lives and interdependencies.*

Linked impacts of economic changes were also noticed in the experience of children, young people and adults. As noted throughout this thesis, the everyday lives of Ghanaian transnational families are highly embedded in transnational social relationships.

Parent's poor economic conditions mainly resulted from exploitative employment conditions (e.g. low income and several hours of work). Most working-class parents had to take on long hours of work in order to be able to afford the cost of living in London as noted in Chapter 7. Primarily, poverty and economic deprivation as experienced by young people in an increasingly monetised and commoditised childcare in Britain meant that some families are unable to afford the cost of living and childhood.

For British-Ghanaian transnational children or children who were living in the UK, their form of economic crisis was also manifested through the rising cost of childcare. Working-class parents some of whom were employed in zero-hours contract jobs or security guard work often experienced high job uncertainty - as sometimes working hours varied between overtime and less working hours - and were poorly paid. Long working hours made it difficult to combine mothering or personal childcare with wage work. Inadequate wages meant parents were unable to afford the cost of childcare in addition to the fact that they felt

it was unethical to procure care from the market as it did not meet the quality of care they expected for their children. Consequently, children were sent to Ghana. Furthermore, the accounts of families also suggested that in most cases of poverty and material deprivation, discursive elements of what is a 'good childhood' within the Ghanaian transnational social fields were prevalent. For instance, while life abroad was considered 'better,' advanced countries were not considered good for young children's moral upbringing. Similarly, while parents may not have enough money to afford commoditised care, the ethics of care which suggest that care should be provided by the parents or at least not purchased on the market also informed decisions to move children to Ghana. Thus, it is argued that a mix of economic and sociocultural factors informs decisions to return children to Ghana. When children move to Ghana, they often have an enhanced economic status due to the high value of the dollar or the pound sterling, which enables them to move into a higher economic class. In principle, their class shifts through movements and therefore children's vulnerability to crisis was not a constant condition (Punch, 2012). The experience of looking for a 'better life' suggests that a 'better life' is not absolute throughout migrant's life course. It is in constant negotiation over time with space and social relations (Collyer and King, 2015). This challenges dominant categorisations of advanced countries being the 'destination' or 'better place' migrants are looking for and developing countries being the 'origin' or 'bad place' migrants are fleeing from. Essentially, the experiences of transnational children and their parent's practices challenge these categorisations. This thesis, therefore, corrects a tendency within Migration Studies not to interrogate the complexities behind the mantra that migrants move for a 'better life'.

Despite the struggle of trying to manage the conditions of social reproduction between the shrinking of state involvement in social reproduction and the burdens of highly exploitative labour relations, most of the transnational migrant parents managed to ensure that their children did not have a hard childhood but rather a good childhood, as most mothers put it through the social support of family or what I refer to as 'social kinship'. The burden of childcare was often shifted to Ghana and also young people were involved in managing the economic assets in Ghana of migrant families, especially housing, as well as older siblings and foster parents taking care of the returnee child. Throughout this process of return and care, it was interesting to note not only how the remittance from abroad enabled

children in Ghana to receive an education but also how adult migrants depended on children in Ghana for what I have called ‘reverse remittances’ to survive in the UK.

Due to low income and increasing privatisation of education or additional costs even for public education in Ghana, most families are faced with the difficulty of meeting the increasing cost of education. So, children in Ghana often depend on their parents for financial support or remittances for their education, in certain cases where parents were experiencing poverty or remittances were delayed, it impacted on children, who had to stay home due to unpaid school fees. Through the linked-life approach, it was also possible to understand that sometimes the youngest children suffered the consequence of poverty when household decisions were made for the oldest to go to school while the younger one’s education enrolment is delayed. That being said, for children who may return to Ghana without their parents’ remittances are often able to secure them private education which is often of high quality and leads to optimal educational outcomes compared to government or public education. In essence, and unsurprisingly, whether transnational children experience economic advantages or disadvantages in accessing education is dependent on their parent’s economic status and this is especially the case in origin countries where privatisation of education is becoming the norm for the middle-classes.

If providing childcare and education is one set of problems caused by economic crisis, access to affordable housing was also a key indicator of the struggle to maintain social reproduction. Some families were displaced from London by social housing policies and others by the unaffordability of rents in the capital. During such periods, relations who have housing including grandparents or parents of transnational children and young people may offer accommodation. Children who move out of the city due to the inability of parents to cope with the rising cost of living also risk losing access to the multicultural capital of London and their social network of friends. Similarly, the experiences of some young people show how leaving the city can mean a disruption of social reproduction when older children choose to stay in the city and younger ones had little care at home due to the absence of the older sibling.

Similarly, for families in the UK, young people who had jobs often found their salary was too low to secure certain needs including meeting housing costs. Many were still dependent on their parents for a home. Moreover, for non-migrant children in transnational families their accounts suggested, in addition to poverty impacting their access to education,

it also affected everyday basic needs such as food. Other young people including youth and young adults also experienced struggles with unemployment or low earnings.

*Human agency in choice-making.*

With economic constraints, meaning that families often had inadequate food or poor access to education, individuals take action to overcome these constraints through migration and with the support of the collective family unit (including both kin and non-kin relations). For instance, young people may embark on internal migration. Similarly, child circulation across households is common in Ghana. As young people come of age, their aspirations to move abroad are often heightened due to the failure of public education in Ghana and the perceived value of education abroad (if one chooses to return). However, despite rising aspirations and young people's actions in taking steps to be migration 'creditworthy', a series of barriers exist that particularly denies poor and working-class families and young people the possibility of becoming mobile. As noted, increasingly, a number of young people are becoming immobile or in the state of 'waithood', for a chance to move.

In addition to young people choosing to migrate independently, the decision to work- either paid or unpaid- and earn an income or forge new networks and parent's decision to send their children to Ghana for care are important aspects of the agential competence of members of the transnational family to survive economic changes or crisis. As I will discuss later on, some of these practices have been important in social network formation.

This section has highlighted the findings of the thesis to show that at different life stages, children and young people encounter various forms of economic crisis which constrains their lives. This is important to understanding the changing contexts and what it means to be a child or an adult in a transnational social field. The life course approach is also critical to understanding timing, social change and also disruptions in social reproduction as young people struggle to contribute to the social reproduction of themselves and their families across the constraints and opportunities of age, gender and class.

A key finding of this research is that while economic crisis may result in poverty and material resource deprivation, transnational households creatively respond to the crisis through various economic and social practices. The section that follows will discuss how the transnational family sustains itself through various practices. By doing some of these activities, they reshape the transnational social fields by expanding their social spaces and

networks which ultimately helps to enrich their forms of capital including through economic capital accumulation.

*A multi-sited approach to understanding how the transnational family sustains its reproductive needs in times of economic crisis*

In this thesis, I have argued that in order to understand the material social practices of transnational families it is important to discover what goes in at the various arenas of social reproduction. Likewise, beyond studying various sites (e.g. churches in the UK or homes of respondents) within the nation-state, it is also important to consider the social ties and the practices that migrants engage in beyond the UK (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002; Schiller, 2007). Most migration studies or research pertaining to the economic crisis consider social reproduction arenas separately or sometimes choose to investigate just one of these: the school, church, work or home. In the research for this thesis, I interacted with children and their parents across the multiple arenas critical to how families reproduce themselves. In other words, the theoretical and methodological approaches I have utilised to produce critical (counter)topographies connecting different localised and globalised social spaces reveal the intersecting effects of political-economic change and prompts us to rethink policies and practical solutions to addressing economic crises' effects. This can allow us to understand not just the complexities of how the transnational families deal with social reproduction in times of crisis but the contradictions between capital and labour and also the interconnected impacts of capitalism across critical topographies and hierarchies (Katz, 2001). For instance while, the decision of the respective mothers of Afia and Mercy may be considered as an irrational or neglectful, placing their children 'at-risk' or making them 'vulnerable' to effects of parental migration, my interaction with biological and foster parents at different sites of the transnational social field – the UK and Ghana - enabled me to understand the context within which the difficult choice of sending children back home is made. Afia's awareness about her home, neighbourhood and school in Ghana and the UK, for instance, demonstrated not only a sense of how she was going to miss her friends but also how her mother would need to visit London with her sometimes or call relations in Ghana to enable her to sustain her social networks of schoolmates, friends and also her 'grandma'.

Likewise, while some adult migrants informed me about sending money to their children in Ghana, thereby creating an impression of the child being an 'economic

dependent,’ it was not until I was in Ghana that I understood that these same children were generating economic capital themselves. Their children were involved in either paid or unpaid work, sometimes selling goods for their parents or collecting rents to send to the UK as reverse remittances. Besides, I would not have been aware of children who were sometimes absent from school due to delayed remittances.

#### *At home*

Within transnational households, migration - whether internal or international – is considered an important strategy by which families secure income from work or remittances to sustain themselves. Children demonstrate awareness of the impact of economic crisis when they do not get a quality education or good food and may consider migration as an option (Hashim, 2007). For instance, as noted in the case of Ama Duku (Chapter 5) internal migration enabled her to escape poverty and poor education. In effect, through migration for work and education, she was able to earn income from work and to independently sustain her household and herself economically. It is also realised that, for other young people who have come of age, most of them are considering international migration despite existing barriers within the ‘migration environment’ as noted in Chapter 4. Thus, for young people who may be considered jobless, and staying at home, finding a way of escape through migration has become their own ‘life’s work’ on a daily basis when they have to look for a passport, a connection man, or call relations to mobilise money. Additionally, with the rising material requirements needed to enable international migration (e.g. bank statement, higher education certificate, etc.), successful migration has increasingly become an activity for the privileged or middle-class families that intend to maintain a middle-class lifestyle. However, even then, middle-class families may embark on migration after a series of cross border mobilities to accumulate ‘migration credit’ that will empower them to access traditionally wealthy countries like the UK or the USA.

The house as a physical structure or a place of rest after life’s work has become a major contributor to social reproduction and sustaining the family. First of all, as noted in Chapter 5, most migrant parents have built houses in Ghana known as ‘*Bɔga fie*’. While ‘*Bɔga fie*’ is traditionally known as a social status-enhancing asset, my research shows that it is also a major source of economic capital in the form of rental income from Ghana that supplements low wages in the UK.

In terms of British-Ghanaian children, while the house of their parents in Ghana could suggest that their return is made easier by having an already prepared place to stay on personal or family visits to Ghana, it can be speculated that in the future, if their parent's return to Ghana for retirement they are likely to visit their parents in Ghana. Thus, housing in itself and parent's return migration is likely to influence future transnationality where young people have to return to Ghana to visit their parents.

Furthermore, due to rising housing costs in both Ghana and in the UK, amongst poor economic conditions of young people, young people have also adopted the coping strategy of staying with their parents, though over time most of them feel 'stuck' and struggle to negotiate their gender identities and independence.

#### *At School*

Chapter 4 of this thesis has indicated how local and neoliberal globalised education has become a means by which society and families feel they can have possibilities of migrating overseas for higher education and becoming 'somebody'. However, education in Ghana is increasingly being privatised and the cost of quality education from the private intuitions means that the burden of social reproduction through education has fallen on families. For transnational non-migrant or returned children, remittances from abroad may allow them to access quality or private education as noted earlier on.

That being said, my interactions with non-migrant children in Ghana, revealed that migrant remittances are sometimes inconsistent – they may delay and the foster parent(s) may make payment arrangements to keep the child in school as unpaid fees sometimes resulted in school non-attendance. The experiences of delayed remittances that affect school attendance is interesting as in most cases, the migration literature generalises that remittances are important for education without delving into incidences of delays resulting from parent's poor economic conditions abroad and how it affects children's continued education over time.

At school young people may feel that there is another form of crisis in the education system that does not prepare them well for work due to the quality of the education delivered, especially in government schools. Consequently, young people may attend school feeling anxious about school-to-work transitions or may be unemployed after school due to the freeze on public sector employment.

## *Work*

Paid and unpaid work was being performed by both children and other young people within transnational social fields as part of individual and collective coping strategies of families.

Experiences and anxiety about poverty, precarity and material economic deprivation did not necessarily make Ghanaians abroad vulnerable to returning back to Ghana. Rather the majority of young adults and older adults undertook a number of creative strategies including building a house in Ghana, as noted earlier, or running commercial enterprises from their home in London or sending goods to Ghana for sale. Their entrepreneurial activities can be conceptualised as a transnational livelihood made possible by the flows of resources between Ghana and the UK.

Children and childhoods were often central to the success of enterprises as they were considered as ‘helpers’ of ‘small tasks’ in housework or in home-working, for example threading needles. I also found that young people are key players, caretaking migrant homes in Ghana. Due to the migration of adult relations, young people who stay have come to support their adult homeowners by taking care of their homes including collecting rent from tenants and sending it to the UK. My research contributes to the notion of reverse remittances, an underexplored research area, to contest the dominant notion that remittances flow from advanced countries to developing countries. Reverse remittances as an emerging transnational practice, therefore, has become an important means of economic capital for sustaining Ghanaian-British transnational households. The economic capital from Ghana has become useful in meeting the cost of living, especially when income from wage work in the UK is insufficient. That being said it is important to mention that in some cases not all accumulated money is sent to the UK. Sometimes a portion was left to pay for children’s school fees and to avoid the usual remittance transfer cost from the UK to Ghana.

The house as a physical structure requires care or maintenance works. Young people living in migrant houses or *Bɔga fie* often undertook unpaid domestic work in order to maintain the house. This domestic work was gendered through unequal distribution of labour. While girls were required to clean the houses in Ghana, boys were often asked to collect rent and send it in the form of reverse remittances to London, a practice which is entrenched in patriarchy and patrilineal family structures. Thus, in understanding transnational childhoods it becomes clear that transnational practices also reinforce gendered



norms about what boys and girls should do, especially in Ghana as discussed across the Chapters of this thesis.

Apart from providing care for the maintenance of migrant homes in Ghana, children who stay behind in Ghana are also involved in other forms of care such as emotional and intimate care for adult migrants. The age of intense globalisation means that children and young people's involvement in care are different from what we know. In most of the migration literature we realise that young people are often dependent on adults for maintaining emotional ties, however this is not always the case, especially when young people have personal technologies (e.g. smartphones or laptops) As noted in this research, they exchange motivational messages and also celebration of occasional parental events such as Mother's Day through virtual connections. Their caring role is crucial given the emotional needs of migrants in western countries where they may feel a sense of loneliness, isolation, individualised lives or lack of community, especially when they are not members of Hometown Associations.

Young people's care relationships with adults are often bound in a sense of reciprocity and trust. I was once asked by someone if 'other' young people who are incorporated in transnational families do not feel exploited or will not be disappointed if their aspirations of moving overseas through their 'fictive' or 'social' mothers go unrealised. This question is also connected to the fact that children and young people's domestic work - whether older children are taking care of younger children or cleaning the house - is unpaid. While some people may consider this as exploitative (Anderson, 2000), it is important to note that in most cases children and young people did not consider it as exploitative. They rather considered their everyday work in the household as a kind gesture based on present relationship conditions. Moreover, their exchanges were rather based on an ideology of cultural reciprocity. Thus, while young people maintained homes and sent remittances to homeowners in London, adults gave them free accommodation even if they were not kin-relations. Additionally, it is noted that children and young people who acted as carers were trusted more highly than kin relations in some instances. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter 5, 6 and 7, their contributions to domestic work or transnational practices often enabled them to forge and consolidate their transnational ties with adults. Here it is also important to note that their incorporation in transnational families challenges dominant notions and discourse that focuses on kin relations as persons who maintain active transnational practices within

transnational social fields, thereby suggesting the important role that non-kin relations may play in the maintenance of social fields.

It is also worth mentioning that sometimes the cost of social reproduction was redistributed among adults such as friends of adult parents or older siblings in the UK, especially where they were within the same city or neighbourhood. Where parent's had limited networks of relations in the UK, the burden or cost of childcare was shifted to older women or grandmothers in Ghana. This latter practice underscores the displacement in social reproduction across the transnational social field.

Paid work is also another way by which certain young people who have come of age come to see themselves as neoliberal subjects who can leverage their cultural and social capital for economic capital accumulation. As young people move between Ghana and the UK or, increasingly, to other places, they may consciously or unconsciously accumulate or leverage certain social, cultural or economic practices.

Employment in transglobal enterprises was a key strategy for survival and a means by which young people have come to reshape the transnational social field. By being transglobal, I mean they maintained connections with more than two countries in contrast to the two-way nation-state relationship that is often discussed in the transnational migration literature. Young people engage with diverse people and places for work and network formation. Where young people had same-age relations in Ghana, they undertook transnational exchanges of trading in goods from Ghana for sale in the UK. Moreover, they engage in activities that attracted a wider market. The commercial sales business thrived on multicultural networks of customers and on trust between buyers and sellers in diverse locations. While networks are important, young people also draw on cultural capital accumulated from childhood transnational practices of, for instance, having lived in Ghana and being competent in a Ghanaian language and cultural symbols. Consequently, they demonstrate cultural competence about products and how to make meaning of a Ghanaian cultural product to both Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians in and outside the UK. By engaging with diverse people and places for forming economic capital, I argue that contemporary British-Ghanaian transnational children or young people are more transglobal than transnational. This finding is important in the sense that most transnational studies often have a binary focus of origin and sending countries. However, in the age of globalisation and uncertainty, it will be important to understand migrant's multinational or transglobal

practices aimed at capital accumulation which is needed in meeting the cost of social reproduction in the present and future.

### *Church*

The church also served as an important site for sustaining social reproduction. At the church, children are often considered as future beings who are expected to maintain the religious practices they have been inducted into by the older generation. In other words, religious socialisation centred on children's future rather than the present. At church, children were also involved in unpaid works or what they termed as 'service to God' which may be gendered in Ghana or gender-neutral in the UK. As young people come of age, they may become resistant to practices within certain traditional churches and prefer contemporary multicultural churches that allow them to participate in decision-making. Moreover, as noted young people in churches may consume globalised religious cultures (including popular music), forge new networks of 'brothers' and 'sisters' who are not necessarily Ghanaians but whom they may find important in their work transitions.

### **Contemporary transnational childhoods and youthhood**

Twenty years ago, Massey et al. (1998:3 ) posited that: 'The theoretical concepts now employed by social scientists to analyse and explain international migration were forged primarily in the industrial era and reflect its particular economic arrangements, social institutions, technology, demography and politics. ... The classical approach has now entered a state of crisis, challenged by new ideas, concepts, and hypotheses.' Since the 1990s, new transnational migration approaches have emerged as a way of capturing family formations in relation to links that exist between migrants and non-migrants and the economic, political, and cultural conditions influencing their practices and symbolic meanings. However, in most cases the transnational studies focusing on children have often projected the family as one in a state of crisis. They have emphasised the emotional vulnerabilities and portrayed migrant parents fathering or 'mothering from a distance' as a means to sustain the transnational family, without focusing on children and young people's agency (Parreñas, 2001a).

This thesis contributes to childhood studies and migration studies in two new ways: First of all, it contributes to our understanding of transglobal childhoods and youth identities as young people engage in various practices in local and globalised social fields. This study of the everyday lives of children and young people across various arenas of social

reproduction and critical topographies has shown that it is not enough to conceptualise their opportunities and constraints across transnational binaries of developing and developed countries or origin and destination countries. The children and young people engaged in this study either as non-migrants, or would-be migrants have globalised aspirations of escaping local constraints and accessing education, religion or work opportunities elsewhere. As children of migrants who are coming of age, their identities are transglobal. While transnational studies or understanding of migrant networks is often constructed in a binary sense of transnational as connections between two nation-states, young people in the age of globalisation are enabled to move and interact and keep in touch with diverse people for work and other forms of relationships. Thus, in conceptualising young people's social networks and their forms of capital and how these secure their social reproduction or 'life's work' it is important to understand the stretch of their networks beyond the traditional dichotomies of origin and destination countries.

Family migration research has made an enormous contribution towards understanding aspects of kinships and transnational relationships between kin and non-kin relations (Basch, Glick Schiller and Szanton Blanc, 1994; Miller, 2007). In the limited literature on fictive kinship, children and other young people's perspectives are often overlooked (Ibsen and Klobus, 1972; Chatters, Taylor and Jayakody, 1994; Carsten, 2004). Yet, as noted in this thesis, children play an active role in creating kin relationships and maintaining kinship. Their ability to practice *social kinship* cannot be merely understood as 'fictive' given that it is based on daily life practices such as conversations, domestic work, living together and routine life celebrations at home or within virtual social spaces. Such activities are critical to establishing a sense of family and closeness rather than imaginations.

The social ties between migrants and non-migrants are considered critical to the maintenance of transnational social fields. Among British-Ghanaian children, their return and circulation between places and their encounters with kin relations foster some form of networks. Children's formation of networks is not limited to biological relations but also non-kin relations. For instance, regarding social kinship, their relationship with foster carers in Ghana and also foster parents in London often thickened or got stronger. The role of children in adults' network was often clearer when the children left Ghana and networks among migrant and non-migrant adults got weaker because the reason of maintaining ties

such as calling to ask about the child, were no longer necessary. Thus, children are central to the strength of an adult's network formation. As noted, older children often engage in transnational practices of sending messages or calling migrant parents or social kin relations. However, their approach to non-kin relationships suggests that young people do not need to be members of a transnational family before they undertake transnational practices. For children in Ghana, while the creation of social kinship through local and transnational practices ensures their incorporation into the transnational household, it allows them to find specific life provisions such as accommodation from a Ghanaian homeowner who mostly lives in London or remittances to cater for food and education expenditure in Ghana. Additionally, in Ghana and the UK, social kinship serves as a safety net for children given that in times of need they can call on their 'fictive' relations or 'social' mothers, auntie and uncle, especially when their biological parents are unable to do so. For other young people in either Ghana or the UK who maintain this practice into their youthhood and adulthood, they benefit from social solidarity networks. Social solidarity is evident in practices of information sharing about economic opportunities (e.g. jobs) and housing or support at various life course events including financial and emotional support in periods of family bereavement, childbirth and school graduation.

Secondly, the thesis contributes to understanding how the social and cultural construction of childhood, the core concern of Childhood Studies, shapes and is shaped by the transnational field and the transnational families in that field. These socio-cultural constructions of childhood are important for understanding how parents and children come to think of themselves as being a 'good mother' or having a 'good childhood' and where these obligations need to be accomplished.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Basic information about the sample household research participants

House hold (H)	Household members <sup>34</sup>	Gender Male or Female	Age (years)	Location	Occupation (Working or in School)	Housing tenure
H1a	Edith	Female	36+ Adult	London	Stay-at-home mother	Council housing
	Steven	Male	36 + Adult	London	Money-transfer operator	
	Ben	Male	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
	Emmanuel	Male	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
H1b	Kwabena	Male	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Unemployed	Private renting
	Esther	Female	25– 35 Young Adult	Kumasi	Unemployed	
	Kofi	Male	5-9 Child	Kumasi	In primary school	
	Gideon	Male	5-9 Child	Kumasi	In primary school	
	Doris	Female	10-19 Adolescent	Kumasi	In high school	
H1c	Robert	Male	36 + Adult	London	Entrepreneur	Council housing
	Lina	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
	Tilly	Female	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
H2a	Clara	Female	36 + Adult	London	Social worker	Council housing
	Steven	Male	20-24 Youth	London	In university	
	Caroline	Female	20-24 Youth	London	In university	
H2b	Sylvia	Female	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Lawyer	Private renting
H3a	Geraldine	Female	36 + Adult	London	Caregiver	Homeowner in both Ghana and the UK with Child
	Anna	Female	20-24 Youth	London	Teacher	
	Gladys	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	

<sup>34</sup> Name of household members are all pseudonyms chosen by research subjects

						living with her
H3b	Ama Duku	Female	10-19 Adolescent	Kumasi	In high school	Living in the house of Geraldine
H3c	Naana	Female	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Food vendor	Private renting
	Sarpong	Male	10-19 Adolescent	Kumasi	In high school	
H4a	Florence	Female	36 + Adult	London/ Nottingham	Nurse	Private renting ( was living in London and moved to Nottingham)
	Afia	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London/ Nottingham	In primary school	
H4b	Ruth	Female	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Seamstress/ Carer	Homeowner
	Osei	Male	20-24 Youth	Kumasi	Apprentice	
H5	Kwaku	Male	36 + Adult	London	Security guard	Private renting
	Michelle	Female	36 + Adult	London	Trader	
	Kwame	Male	10-19 Adolescent	London	In primary school	
	Regina	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In primary school	
H6a	Ivan	Male	36 + Adult	London	Cleaner	Private renting
	Leticia	Female	36 + Adult	London	Cleaner	
	Asante	Male	36 + Adult	London	Cab driver	
H6b	Mercy	Female	10-19 Adolescent	Kumasi	In high school	Family house build by Ivan
	Grace	Female	20-24 Youth	Kumasi	Nurse	
	Linda	Female	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Carer	
	Tony	Male	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Unemployed	
H7a	Ken	Male	36 + Adult	London	Security guard	Private renting (was considering applying for council accomm
	Veronica	Female	36 + Adult	London/ Netherlands	Cleaner/Trader	

						odation during the period of data collection as Landlord was about to sell the flat)
H7b	Yaa	Female	20-24 Youth	Kumasi /Accra	National service personnel	Family house
	Baaba	Female	25– 35 Young Adult	Kumasi	Bank accountant	
	Sandra	Female	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Trader	
	Richard	Male	25– 35 Young Adult	New York	Navy Sailor	Private renting
H7c	WO	Male	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Retired soldier	Homeowner
H8a	Kwesi	Male	36 + Adult	London	IT Consultant	Homeowner
	Louisa	Female	36+	London	Nurse	
	Rosemary	Female	25– 35 Young Adult	London	Shop attendant	
	Alberta	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
H8c	Spaceman	Male	36 + Adult	London	Security Guard	
H8b	John	Male	20-24 Youth	Accra	Unemployed	
	Hilda	Female	20-24 Youth	Accra	Part-time employment and Student	
H9a	Edward	Male	36 + Adult	London	Technician	Council housing
	Helena	Female	36 + Adult	London	Caterer & Seamstress	
	Isaac	Male	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
H9b	Linda	Female	25– 35 Young Adult	London	Nurse	Private renting
H9c	Fifi	Male	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	Private renting

	Akua	Female	36 + Adult	London	Banker	
H9d	Josiah	Male	36 + Adult	London/ Accra	Entrepreneur	Private renting
H10a	Isaiah	Male	25– 35 Young Adult	London	Train assistant	Council housing
	Kyerewaa	Female	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
	Kuuku	Male	5-9 Child	London	Nursery	
H10b	Sofo Europe Ba (Kwadwo)	Male	20-24 Youth	Kumasi	High school graduate	Staying in fathers uncompl eted building
H10c	Abeku	Male	36 + Adult	New York	Caregiver	Private renting
	Takyiwaa	Female	36 + Adult	New York	Researcher	
	Kojo	Male	10-19 Adolescent	New York	In high school	
	Nora	Female	10-19 Adolescent	New York	In high school	
H11a	Genevieve	Female	36 + Adult	London/ Swindon	Teacher	Private renting (use to live with parents in London and moved to Swindon while I was doing my data collectio n)
	Annarina	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
	Jane	Female	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
	Ophelia	Female	5-9 Child	London	In primary school	
H11b	Kofi	Male	36 + Adult	Kumasi	Pastor	Homeo wner
H11c	Millicent	Female	5-9 Child	Juansa, Kumasi	In primary school	Family house
	Rose	Female	10-19 Adolescent	Juansa, Kumasi	In high school	
	Yawson	Male	20-24 Youth	Juansa, Kumasi	High school graduate	

	Mr. Afriyie	Male	36 + Adult	Juansa, Kumasi	Farmer and Bank Lending Associate	
	Aunt Ama	Female	36 + Adult	Juansa, Kumasi	Food vendor at a school	
	Kwamena	Male	10-19 Adolescent	Juansa, Kumasi	In high school	
	Mills	Male	5-9 Child	Juansa, Kumasi	In primary school	
H12	Jerry	Male	25– 35 Young Adult	London	Entrepreneur	Private renting
H13a	Amanpene	Female	25– 35 Young Adult	London	International Development worker	Living with parents
	Agya	Male	36 + Adult	London/ Harrow	Retired (formerly a Banker and shop owner)	Homeowner
	Maame	Female	36 + Adult	London	Retired teacher	
H13b	Steve	Male	36 + Adult	New York	Accountant	Homeowner
	Yaayaa	Female	36 + Adult	New York	Administrator	
	Ellen	Female	5-9 Child	New York	Primary school	
	Ashely	Female	5-9 Child	New York	Primary school	
H14	Blessing	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	Private renting
	Sylvanus	Male	36 + Adult	London	Pastor/Tutor	
H15a	Marvy	Female	36 + Adult	London	Caregiver	Council housing
	Angela	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
H15b	Kevin	Male	20-24 Youth	Accra/Kumasi	High school graduate	Living with uncle
	Julius	Male	25– 35 Young Adult	Kumasi (use to live in London)	Graduate student	Living with parents
H15c	Abena	Female	20-24 Youth	London (but sometimes in the New York	Entrepreneur	Private renting

				)		
	Adjoa	Female	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	
H15d	Louis	Male	20-24 Youth	London	Housing Officer with a charity organisation	Council housing
H15e	Alex	Male	10-19 Adolescent	London	In high school	

## Appendix 2

### Glossary: Twi terms, phrases, and concepts

<i>Aburokyire</i>	Abroad
<i>Aburokyire nkwadaa</i>	Overseas born Ghanaian children
<i>Akwantuo mu nsem</i>	Challenges that migrants face
<i>Ampe</i>	A jump, clap and a foot-step forward game
<i>Animguase</i>	Shame or disgrace
<i>Animguase mfata Okannii ba</i>	Disgrace does not befit the child of an Akan
<i>Animuonyam</i>	Glory or honour
<i>Obarima ensu</i>	Boy, do not cry
<i>Boniaye</i>	Ungrateful person
<i>Bɔga fie</i>	House built with migrant remittances and material resources
<i>Bɔga ba</i>	The son or daughter of a wealthy migrant
<i>Dabi Dabi Ebe Ye Yie</i>	It shall be well one day
<i>Dame</i>	Draft game
<i>Ete sen?</i>	How are you?
<i>Feree ne animguasee dee fanyinam owuo</i>	It is better to die than to be ashamed and disgraced
<i>Gye Nyame</i>	Except God
<i>Abi you know dada</i>	You already know
<i>Obaapa</i>	A good woman
<i>Obi nnim obrempon ahyase.</i>	Nobody knows the beginning of a great man. <sup>i</sup>
<i>Ohohoo</i>	Stranger or outsider
<i>Obware</i>	Pit and Pebble game
<i>Pilolo</i>	A hide-and-seek game

<i>Sankɔfa</i>	Return and get it
<i>Sansa Akroma</i>	A migratory bird
<i>Trɔtrɔ</i>	Local transport in Ghana
<i>Woto wo bo ase dwa tetea a, wohu ne nsono</i>	If you patiently dissect an ant, you see its intestines. With patience difficulties can be overcome

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